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The Real and the Fake: Imagineering Nature and Wilderness at Disney's Wilderness Lodge

by

Jennifer Anne Cypher ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Department of Anthropology

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall 1995

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Dr. Eric S. Higgs

Dr. Jean DeBernardi

Dr. Margaret M. Van De Pitte

Dr. Milton Freeman

Abstract

The intent of this project is to investigate North American concepts of nature and wilderness as they are represented in the human-constructed environment of the Wilderness Lodge at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Anthropological theory suggests that culture is the way in which human beings negotiate relationships with nature; Disney's Wilderness Lodge is a representation of a certain kind of relationship. The Wilderness Lodge is a themed resort hotel which offers guests a 'seamless' themed experience; the chosen theme, a tribute to American National Parks, is constructed into the hotel and its environs at every possible level in order to provide the visitor with a convincingly 'real' experience. Disney draws on a long social and cultural history of the concept of nature in America, incorporating ideas and stereotypes about wilderness, nature, the frontier and national parks and constructs a simulated National Park experience.

If anthropology is right, then Disney's vast re-organization of landscapes both natural and cultural must have some impact on notions of reality and nature. In this thesis I argue that themed experience is part of a pervasive pattern of hyperreality which challenges concepts of reality and makes moral judgments about experience and reality more difficult. Disney's foray into the construction of a hyperreal nature is contrasted with the practice of ecological restoration, and the implications for restoration that constructions such as the Wilderness Lodge have are discussed.

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Chapter I
Journey into the imagination: An introduction

> "it is possible to infer pretty much about the nature of a society from the ways in which it chooses to spend its leisure..." (Altick 1978:4).
>
> "Today, as in the past, ideas about things natural must be examined and criticized not only for ways they help us understand the material world, but for the quality of their social and political counsel. Nature will justify anything. Its text contains opportunities for myriad interpretation" (Langdon Winner, The Whale and the Reactor).

The intent of this project is to investigate North American concepts of nature and wilderness as they are presented in the human-constructed environment of the Wilderness Lodge at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Disney's Wilderness Lodge is one of thirteen themed resort hotels located on the Disney World property which claim to offer guests a 'seamless' themed experience; the chosen theme is constructed into the hotel and its environs and is highlighted at every possible level (other themes include the Caribbean Beach Resort and the Grand Floridian Hotel) in order to provide the visitor with a 'real' experience of the themes. The theme of the Wilderness Lodge is that of a National Park wilderness experience, and at the Lodge Disney attempts to distill the essence of National Park lodges found throughout the United States and Canada, in order to offer guests an experience similar to one they might have in a National Park. Disney draws on a long social and cultural history of America since first contact in the statement and representation of this theme, and incorporate ideas and stereotypes about wilderness, nature, the frontier, Native Americans and national parks. This is all done under the guise of both entertainment and education, for the lodge is not only a place to stay, relax and spend money, it is also a place to show off Disney technology and know-how (what Disney calls 'imagineering'), and to a lesser degree, educate the visitor on American National Parks and their importance as American institutions.

Disney wants to offer its guests the opportunity to stay in a hyper-real National Park Lodge setting, the real thing only better, wilderness without dirt or danger. While other Disney hotels offer guests an 'authentic' Polynesian experience, or a taste of turn of the century Floridian elegance, the Wilderness Lodge is billed as a "tribute to the great lodges of the

early 20th century" with the motto "don't just stay, explore". The Lodge and its surroundings, which mimic the Northwestern United States, are entirely human-created, offering the visitor a 'natural' experience in an artificial setting. As a part of Walt Disney World, Disney's Wilderness Lodge takes its place as another attraction in a theme park which deals largely in the world of fantasy achieved through the "careful screening out of undesirable elements and the staging of special activities expressing archetypal ideals" (Real 1977:51). The 'special event' in this case is the Lodge itself, and the 'archetypal ideals' are nature, wilderness, the frontier spirit, the experience of 'the great outdoors', and the myth of the West.

Nature, culture and control

Anthropology commonly identifies culture as the way human beings negotiate a relationship with nature. In Western European cultures, this constructed relationship with nature centres on a perceived division between the natural world and the human world. In North America, this division has become pronounced and the category of wilderness has come to be defined as pristine 'wild nature', which is protected from human involvement and impact. Wilderness has become a highly symbolic commodity in North America, and has been produced and marketed to reflect cultural values in some very specific ways.

As a starting point for these issues I turn to Alexander Wilson's investigation of "The View From the Road", a chapter in his book The Culture of Nature, in which he explores the creation and control of nature as a series of scenic vistas viewed from the road and the tourist area, experienced as natural even while they are acknowledged to be artificially created. This is the story of nature tourism, the growth of which "parallels that of modern industrial society" (Wilson 1991:20). Through its emphasis on travel (especially by automobile), nature tourism and outdoor recreation, tourism "has vastly reorganized not only the geography of North America but also our perceptions of nature and our place in it as humans" (Wilson 1991:21). The building of roads and parkways coincided with the construction of parks, wilderness areas and outdoor recreational opportunities; this was the birth of tourism as a full-fledged industry. This industry, in concert with government agencies, saw opportunities for the development of natural areas as a matter of national concern. Reports put out in both Canada and the United States during the 1960's "suggested that outdoor recreation, far from being a fad, was a component of the national character" (Wilson 1991:44).

The tourism industry was quick to connect this component of national character with another feature of the North American character: our identities as consumers. "The modern history of nature tourism is a history of altered landforms and changed ideas and experiences of the non-human. Broadly speaking, it involves a shift from a pastoral approach to nature to a consumer approach" (Wilson 1991:24). The consumer approach evaluates the potential selling points of a natural area and markets them, the value of a landscape is seen in its ability to please the eye or the recreational needs of the consumer; " 'Scenic value' soon came to be a monetary concept as well as an aesthetic one" (Wilson 1991:42).

While the nature tourism industry began with small scale alterations of natural sites to make them more accessible, larger attempts to 'improve the value' of sites for tourism soon followed. As the natural areas were transformed, so were the intended experiences to be had in them, and both land and experience became controlled by the tourism industry rather than by the consumer. By the 1970's "(t)ourism was no longer so much about service provision as it was about the mass production and management of sight seeing experiences" (Wilson 1991:46). Such production and management has created not only places for nature tourism, but sophisticated consumers of nature, tourists who expect a certain level of infrastructure and certain kinds of experiences when they travel to the great outdoors. Tourists now "expect familiar surroundings - amenities they're called - that are not specific to locale" (Wilson 1991:30). This need for amenities brings one up short against just what makes a natural area valuable, its uniqueness. A contradiction arises between the need for certain standard facilities and the individual nature of a specific site; "(i)ndustrial logic demands standardization, yet we (ha)ve come to define natural settings in part by their uniqueness. The result has been an increasing *production* of natural attractions" (Wilson 1991:48). In order to resolve this conflict further alterations of landscape were attempted; "the geographical focus shifted from natural features of the landscape to artificial ones..." (Wilson 1991:30). The question was no longer 'what does this site have to offer?', but 'what can we create on this site to offer to the (paying) public?'. This new question allowed "the industry to differentiate its products to serve a rapidly expanding market" (Wilson 1991:31), and this differentiation also "made it easier to package and sell nature as a product" (Wilson 1991:28). "Nature tourism catalogued the natural world and created its own spaces out there among the trees, lakes and rocks. It sold us nature-related products, and indeed it began to sell us natural spaces and experiences too" (Wilson 1991:28).

The results of all of this management, production and provision of 'nature' for the benefit of tourists are far-reaching. One of the most significant results has been the organization of experience on a mass scale by tour companies, planners, builders, architects and landscapers. Tourism and sightseeing have become "the organized mass consumption of familiar landscapes" (Wilson 1991:42); these familiar landscapes are constructed for our enjoyment, rather than allowing us to experience the landscape as they existed for purposes other than tourism. Through these physical constructions, holiday experience itself is now constructed in narrowly defined ways, it must be fun, and fun can only take place in spaces designed for holidays. Rather than asking "where in the world shall we go for our holidays?", the tourist asks "where in the selection of places approved and built for tourism shall we go on our holidays?". The organization of tourist experience has significantly limited potential leisure experiences, in particular those kinds of experiences we have in that place we call nature.

Disney's Vacation Kingdom

The development of tourism in the United States over the last forty years and the development of the Disney empire go hand in hand. Walt Disney's original intent in building his first theme park, Disneyland, was to offer families a safe and happy place in which to holiday together. Walter Elias Disney sanitized the forms of the carnival and the amusement park, turning them into the first three dimensional Disney-version; "Disney's park was a cleaned-up version, aimed at a middle-class 'family' audience" (Wallace 1985:40). Along with the construction of nature for the tourist trade, Disney was constructing another kind of world for families to enjoy, and his world also incorporated and constructed nature. Disney's constructed realities have reached their North American peak at Disney World just outside Orlando, Florida, in which the Disney Company has produced three separate theme parks, a shopping village and several other attraction areas on a 28,000 acre property wholly owned and managed by Disney.

While Disneyland may have had more innocent beginnings as strictly an amusement park, Disney World has no such naiveté. Stephen Fjellman reminds us that Disney World, underneath the glamour and the fun, is a business, and a very big business at that. This business is based on selling commodities, and the more things that can be made into commodities, the more things there are to sell; "(t)he corporate project is to bring everything associated with human life into the market and thus under control" (Fjellman 1992:14). This success of this project at Disney World is phenomenal, no matter how you measure it; visitation keeps increasing and the money keeps rolling in. Over 30 million

people visit Disney World every year, this figure alone indicates Disney's far reaching cultural and economic influence.

Like the tourist industry in general, Disney is in the business of constructing, organizing and selling experience; in doing this Disney is intimately involved in the production of landscapes and the selling of stories about nature. Disney World uses space to create and reinforce ideologies, particularly ideologies which are supportive of capitalism and consumption. Disney World is "a kind of spatial analogy of a monopoly capitalism that incessantly produces rhetoric about free enterprise" (Wilson 1985:25). While it is significant that we are physically bounded and directed within Walt's World, what is more "important is that our thoughts are constrained. They are channeled in the interest of Disney itself but also in the interest of the larger corporations with which Disney has allied itself, the system of power they maintain , and the world of commodities that is their life's blood" (Fjellman 1992:13). This need on Disney's part to continue to constrain their guest's thoughts is part of their overall interest in selling as much stuff as possible, in the end nature becomes just one more commodity, another aspect of life to be brought under Disney's corporate control.

Disney's Wilderness Lodge

Disney's Wilderness Lodge is the latest attempt by Disney to commodify and sell nature, wilderness and the experience of the great outdoors. Earlier representations of nature and wilderness brought to you by Disney were largely achieved on the big screen; Disney's own nature films dominated this genre of film for almost twenty years (Wilson 1991: 118). The Wilderness Lodge captures the spirit of nature tourism which is now seen as part of the American national character and gives it a Disney spin, or as the Disney people might say, sprinkles it with pixie dust from Tinkerbell's magic wand. The Wilderness Lodge fits into Disney World in a very special way, far removed from the more obviously landscaped areas, straddling a fine line between wanting to look 'natural' in its surroundings and wanting to toot the Disney horn about how much 'imagineering' it took to create a forest in a Florida swamp. Without the care and planning of a Disney product, the Wilderness Lodge might fly in the face of the overall message about nature presented throughout Disney World, in which a "reordered and rationalized nature 'naturalizes' discourses of progress" (Wilson 1985:25). Yet Disney absorbs the Lodge into this doctrine of progress by emphasizing certain elements of the story of the Lodge. The human struggle against the wilderness is the tale told here, and the bringing under human control, both by physical and

ideological means, of the frontier places the Lodge and its history firmly within the ideological bounds of Disney which see nature as a resource and a commodity.

If anthropology is right, and culture is the conduit through which we access nature, then Disney's vast re-organization of landscapes both natural and cultural must have some impact on our notions of reality and nature. In the construction and the presentation of the Wilderness Lodge, the Disney Company consciously chooses a story to tell about nature, and the relationship humans have with nature. The story it chooses is tied to Disney's need to conduct its business, and it reflects values and ideologies which serve these purposes first, make us feel warm and good about nature second and hopefully make us critical about this construction of nature not at all. While the Wilderness Lodge has a story to tell about Disney as a company and a cultural icon, it also has things to say about North American ideological trends regarding wilderness, nature, culture and consumption. I wish to uncover and talk about these trends, both in terms of how they are expressed by Disney and how they are reflected in the broader realm of North American society.

One of these reflections is seen in the ways in which another cultural group has approached the demise of wilderness. As places which can be identified as 'pristine' wilderness become fewer and fewer, and environmental degradation becomes more widespread, a movement of ecological restoration has sprung up, which advocates the repair or re-creation of ecosystems by humans. Within the restoration community, much talk has gone on about the potential for restoring cultural values and practices along with the land, or cultural restoration, along side natural restoration; there are those who think the two go hand in hand and those who see no relationship between the natural and the cultural under the rubric of restoration (Rogers-Martinez 1992, Bradshaw 1993). I myself believe that cultural restoration must be a part of ecological restoration; cultural values about nature and wilderness are in large part responsible for the development and practice of our current relationships with nature, until these change we will proceed along familiar, oppositional paths.

My research on the cultural implications of ecological restoration led me in part to this work on Disney. Attempts at restoration raise questions about whether we are moving towards a new cultural conceptualization of nature or are still caught in a pattern of control, in which both our conceptions of and behaviour towards nature focus on human use and control of nature. Extreme uses of restoration, of which I would argue Disney's Wilderness Lodge is an example, seem to reflect this tendency to control, and this is troublesome to those who

feel that human experiences of nature are already far too mediated to be meaningful. Following Borgmann's analysis the Wilderness Lodge, because it is removed from it historical and geographical contexts, is hyperreal, and as such it has the potential to "fundamentally alter... (our) relationship with nature" (Borgmann 1993:4). Borgmann questions the authenticity of the experiences offered by Disney World, at the same time as Disney takes great pains to ensure authenticity and 'seamless realism' at all of their attractions, including the Wilderness Lodge. In order to get at some of these issues, the conceptual and philosophical underpinnings of natural areas which are human created, and the cultural mediation of experience which takes place in spaces like Disney's Wilderness Lodge, need to be explored.

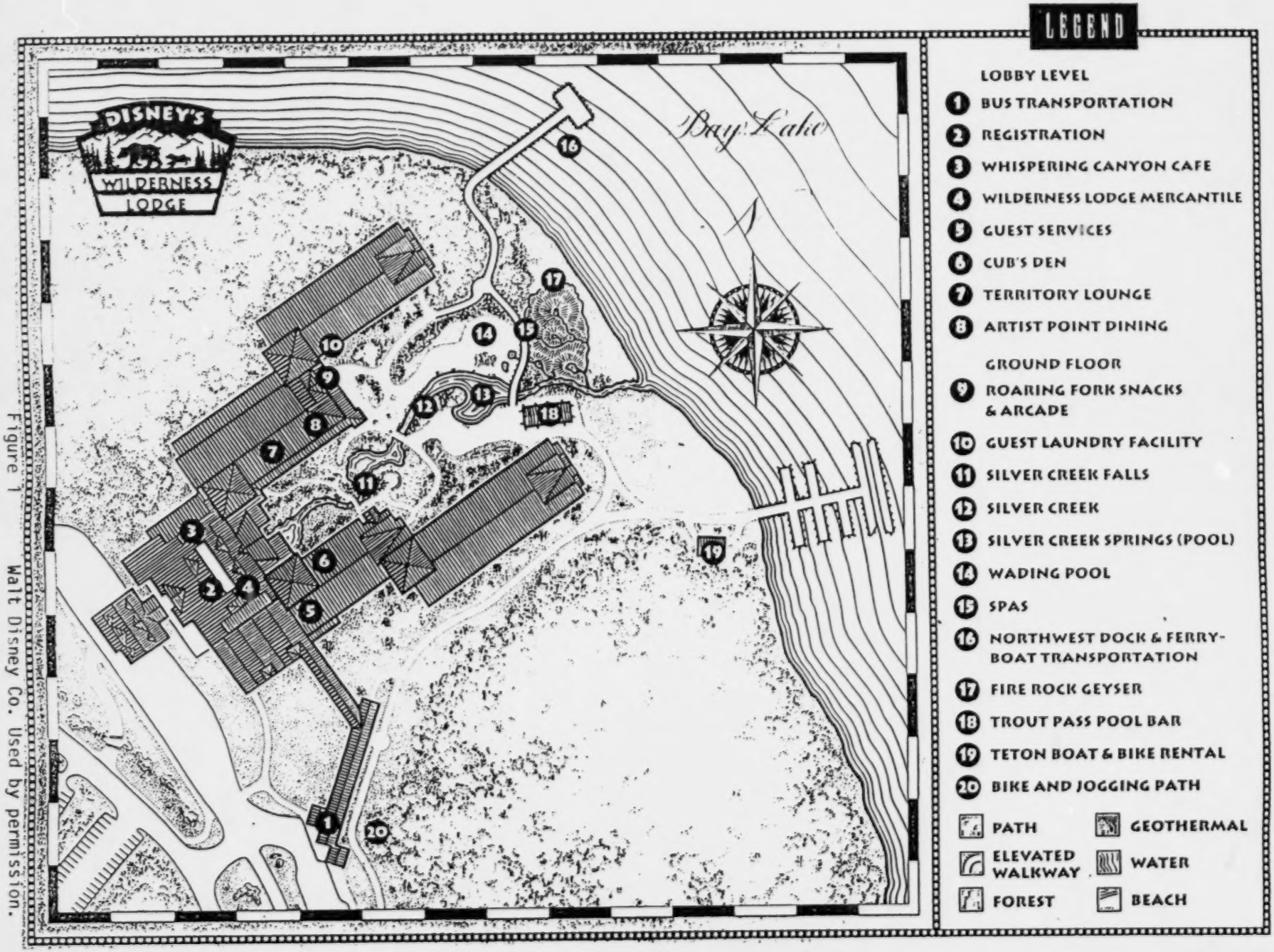
Thesis outline

I begin by describing my experience at Disney World and Disney's Wilderness Lodge, where I spent three weeks conducting field research in October 1994. I outline my field experience, describe the Lodge in detail and discuss my informants at Disney, explaining their contributions to the Wilderness Lodge and to this project. All of this description sets the scene for the critical discussion of the Lodge in the chapters that follow.

Next I look in more detail at the themes of nature, wilderness and the frontier which are portrayed at Disney's Wilderness Lodge; the story which Disney creates about these concepts is discussed, as are the many ways Disney represents them at the Lodge. Nature and wilderness are highlighted as cultural constructs which have been created by historical, philosophical and social circumstances and Disney's particular version of these concepts is explored.

In chapter four I move on to the concept of themed experience, the device which Disney uses to create a wilderness experience at the Lodge and the main method used by Disney to have their guests experience the fantasy which is Disney World. The utopian aspect of themed experience is discussed, and the erasure of time, space and geography which themed experience make possible is outlined. I make an argument for the ability of themed experience to colonize conceptions of nature, and landscape itself, and what the implications of this might be. One of these implications, a break between nature and reality which is encouraged by themed experience, is the topic of chapter five. The moral valuation of the artificial in light of the pervasiveness of hyperreality and artificial nature are discussed. In chapter six I outline my conclusions with reference to the practice of

ecological restoration, and to the larger cultural implications that artificial nature like that created at Disney's Wilderness Lodge may have.



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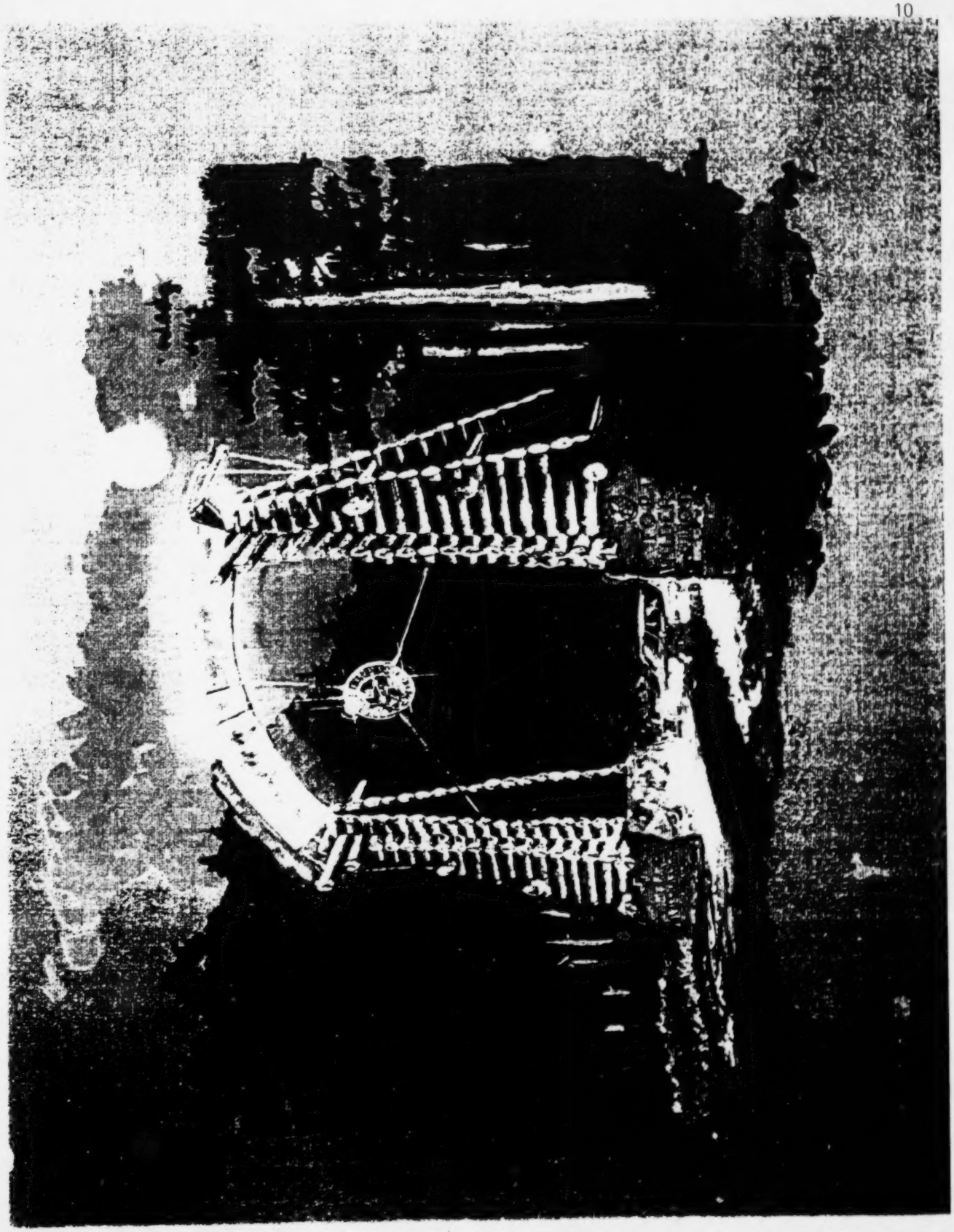

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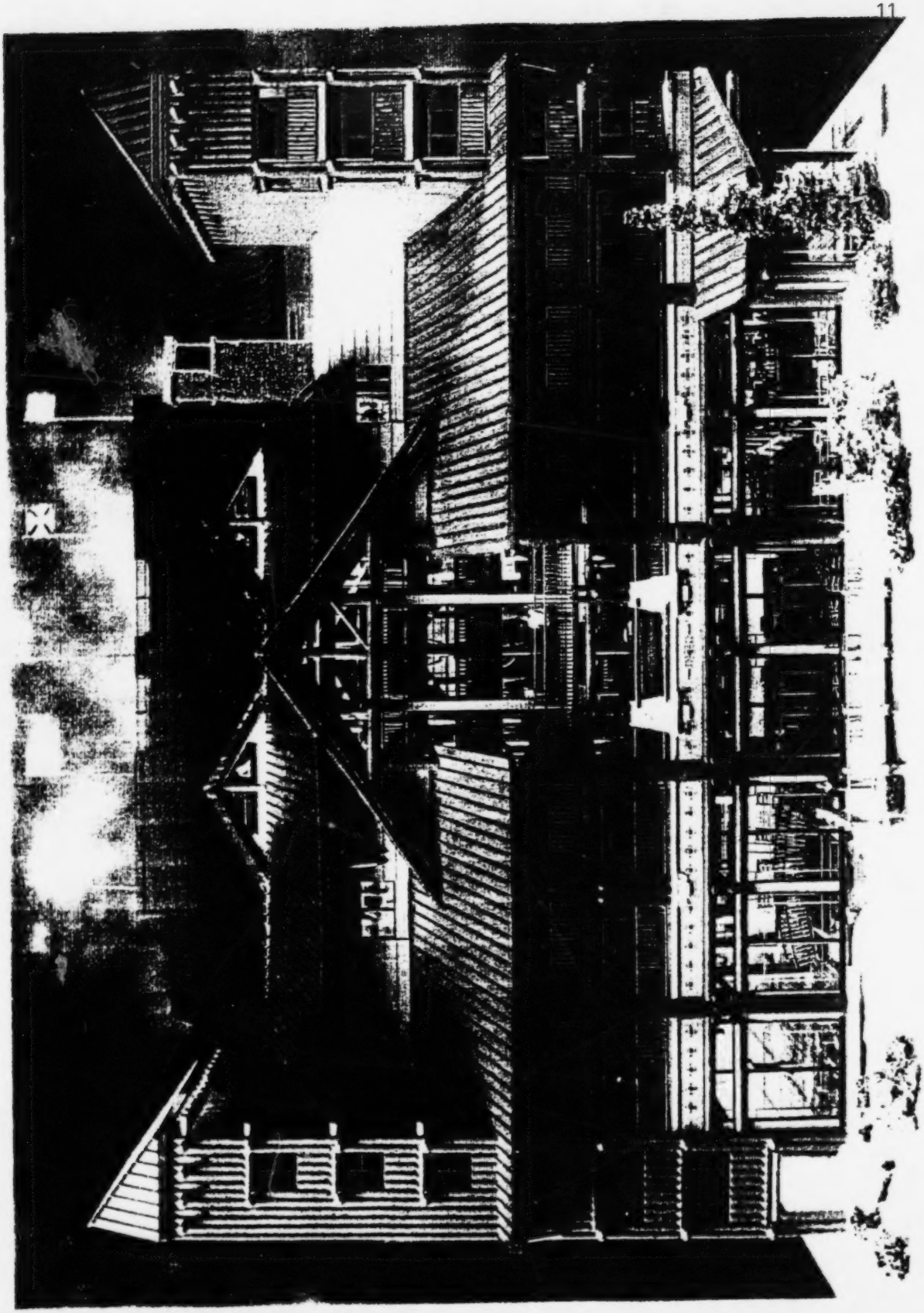

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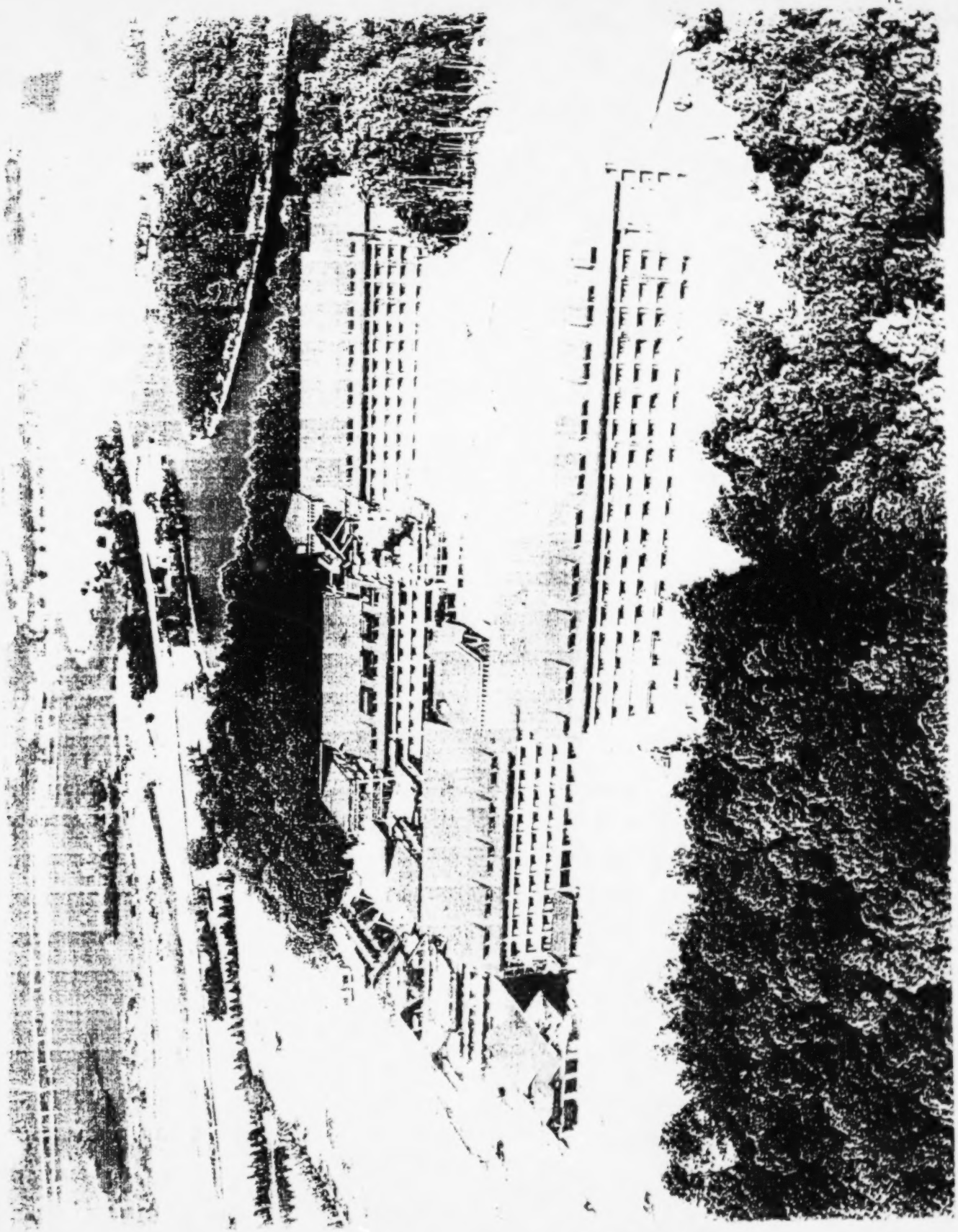

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WILDERNESS
LODGE

Mather Drive

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Chapter II
Mr. Toad's Wild Ride: A field report from Disney's World

> Mr. Toad's Wild Ride "is an amusement park spook house that does not live up to many visitor's expectations or to the Disney reputation for high quality. The facade is intriguing; the size of the building which houses the attraction suggests an elaborate ride. As it happens, the building is cut in half with similar, though not exactly identical, versions of the same ride on both halves. There is, of course, a separate line for each half" (Sehlinger 1994:231).

Unlike many studies, in which one finds a field in which to explore a question or interest, in this instance the field found me. I did, indeed have interests and questions in mind, I knew that I wanted to look at the representation of nature and wilderness; much of my previous work had been in areas of popular culture so this seemed the place for me to look for examples. However, finding the perfect and obvious place to explore these ideas proved elusive until Lands' End teamed up with Disney and did what they do best, advertise through the mail. Disney's Wilderness Lodge was dropped into my lap by my advisor, Eric Higgs, who received an advertisement for the Lodge which was passed on to him by Jonathan Perry, a colleague in Wisconsin. The ad was taken from a Lands' End catalogue, sponsoring special rates at the Wilderness Lodge for Lands' End patrons, and featuring promotional material for the Lodge. At first we treated the Lodge as a kind of high-kitsch, cosmic joke, but as time wore on it became apparent that this was the perfect place for me to carry out research which would combine interests in popular culture and the representation of nature on a grand scale.

The Lodge contains many elements which are of interest to me and helped to shape this project: nature, wilderness, reality and experience, ecological and cultural restoration, art history, popular culture, marketing nature, national parks, nature as a symbol, and countless others. These elements are used consciously at the Lodge, the Disney company has thought through them very carefully, in order to combine, reconstitute, create and represent a coherent vision of what a wilderness lodge should be. This intentionality makes my job both less and more difficult. I don't have to go around second guessing about what Disney is trying to say; if it isn't obvious I can ask someone. On the other hand, the cohesiveness of the vision can lead to pat, practiced answers to my questions, so

I still have to dig more deeply into the representations presented at the Lodge and elsewhere at Disney World, and explore their methods of expression and the meanings which can be drawn from them.

Once Eric had convinced me that he was not joking, and that I really should go to Disney World, I set about trying to contact the right people at Disney. Being a service oriented organization, Disney and its staff were always cheerful, even as they sometimes steered me in completely the wrong direction. The process was relatively swift, however, and after three mornings on the phone (during which I had an interesting time explaining what an anthropologist did) I had the name and number of the person in charge of the Wilderness Lodge project. I had also spoken to the architect of the Lodge in Denver. After a heady exchange of phone calls, letters and faxes, dates were set and arrangements made. Throughout this time, and during my visit to Disney World, the Disney people, my main informant and his assistant especially, were extremely helpful and generous with their time and expertise. It was apparent that at some level they believed strongly in the Disney philosophy and world view, and wanted to share this vision with others.

Interestingly, the Disney Company was extremely cooperative about almost every aspect of my field study, the only information to which I was denied access was in their marketing department, at all other levels I was given pretty free reign, well, free by Disney standards. In thinking about why this was the case, I must conclude that Disney found my study, myself and my status to be non-threatening. As a young, female graduate student, I suppose that Disney did not feel that I would do or write anything which could do them permanent damage, especially of a financial nature. Given their recent, less than pleasant, dealings with relatively small public interest groups regarding the Virginia site for a Disney Civil War Theme Park and the film Priests, distributed by a Disney subsidiary, they may be less open in the future. Also I give credit again to my main informant, and to my sheer luck in contacting the right people. Dogged persistence, and good telephone skills, were also factors in making my field trip a reality.

Once the field site was chosen and the arrangements made for the field trip, I was forced to make my academic intentions clear in the form of a thesis proposal. Writing the proposal enabled me to sift through my background reading and develop a theoretical perspective on which to centre my work in the field. Using the project as an organizing principle I was able to bring together and reconcile material diverse in theoretical bent, discipline and subject matter . Although this work is primarily grounded in an anthropological

perspective and methodology, theoretically it draws from philosophy, sociology, and what is broadly known as cultural studies. Academic work on Disney World comes largely from these areas and the perspective of business and commerce, which necessitated my drawing from related work in other areas. In order to gain a broader understanding of some of the issues involved I have also incorporated works which relate to my topic in more general ways, such as museum studies and historical works regarding parks, fairs and exhibitions.

From these investigations I developed three primary questions to help guide me through the minefield of reality, hyperreality, nature and culture that was to constitute my field work:

1. what does the Lodge offer that a trip to a 'real' wilderness area cannot?
2. what are the underlying themes and concepts about nature that are part of the Lodge? how are they commodified and 'sold' to guests?
3. how does the Lodge play on visitor's perceptions about reality, nature and experience in order to communicate and reinforce these themes?

Disney's Wilderness Lodge offers an exemplar of the practice of 'theming' and 'themed experience', an idea which offers a unique perspective on the concepts which ground these questions: nature, reality and experience.

The field experience

In order to explore these questions, I went to Disney World in Orlando, Florida for three weeks to observe and record at the Lodge. I spent time interviewing some of the people who conceived of, developed and saw to completion both the vision of the Lodge and its physical reality. I was also able to go through archival material on the Lodge, its conception and construction. My individual contacts with the Disney corporation include planners and designers, an environmental consultant, the Lodge's general managers, and its primary architect. While the Lodge itself offers vivid evidence of its aims, the people involved at the heart of the Lodge as a project and in its daily operations also offered their testimony about the meaning of the Lodge for them, for Disney World and for the Disney Company.

My field encompassed not only the Wilderness Lodge, but part of the corporate structure and space of Disney and the tourist-Mecca that is Orlando and its environs. The word I have most often used to describe my experience in the field is surreal. This surreality was due in part to the radical shifts in place that I made on a daily basis, these shifts in physical

space were accompanied by ever changing transportation arrangements and both ongoing and extremely temporary negotiations with people about who I was and what I was doing. For the duration of my time in the field I stayed at the Orlando Youth Hostel, which was full of English, Australian, German and Italian tourists, most of whom were there to see Disney World. To get to the offices of Disney Development Company, where my main informant worked, I walked to the downtown transit centre, where I caught the bus with local people, most of whom were African American, most of whom were wearing uniforms: Burger King, Taco Bell and an assortment of hotel cleaning outfits. My hour-long journey took me through what is euphemistically called 'low income housing', and then on to International Drive, several miles of fast food, hotels, motels, convention facilities, water parks and a Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum constructed to look like it had just endured an earthquake. This strip was the destination of most of the passengers. My stop was the last one on the line, in front of the service entrance to the Stouffer Resort Hotel. I still had several blocks to walk to the glass and steel Disney owned complex that housed my chief informant. My bus trips, my stay at the hostel and my interactions with people not under the spell of Disney contrasted sharply with my experiences with Disney World and its inhabitants. It is a testament to the success of Disney World's ability to whisk you away to a world of fantasy that my experience was indeed so dislocating.

Spending time in a place so completely controlled by the tourist industry, and primarily by one attraction, was a new experience for me. Disney is everywhere, and everyone has some connection with Disney. Every local person I spoke to had an opinion about Disney, and it often was not positive. The fact that there is no public transport to Disney World from Orlando is an indication of the fact that Disney wants tourists to come to Disney World, not Orlando, and they want these tourists to stay on Disney property, in Disney hotels, eat Disney food and use the Disney transportation system. This lack of local transport to Disney World also attests to the fact that Disney is not as interested in getting local people to come to the park as it is concerned with getting tourists to come, and that local people who work at Disney must be at least able to afford a car. With its current three-park layout (the Magic Kingdom, EPCOT Center and Disney/MGM Studios) plus two water parks (another is currently being built), a shopping district, five golf courses, sixteen different hotels and camping areas, a nightclub complex, a gas and service station, a nature preserve (brought to you by Friskies, the cat food people), Disney is truly a world unto itself; and it likes it that way. Disney services its own roads, water treatment, waste and sewage, has its own security people and fire station, and produces its own power. In fact, Disney sells electricity to Orlando. With Disney's vast control over people, land,

money and other resources its difficult not to start coming up with conspiracy theories, and while this would be taking things a bit far, I certainly felt their rather palpable influence while in Florida, and it was obvious that the local people did too.

My experience in the field was one of the familiar and the unfamiliar, the obviously real, the not-so-obviously real and the unreal. Stephen Fjellman, an anthropologist who did a long-term study of Disney World, seemed able to steep himself in the atmosphere at Disney; I felt that I skimmed along the surface, unable or unwilling to submerge myself completely. Our different experiences may be due to my relatively short, three week stay, and probably have something to do with my innate reservedness when confronted with Disney-like places. This reticence on my part is a hindrance sometimes, but my fear of being swallowed also means that I am constantly looking for escape routes of either physical or intellectual/ideological/theoretical form. My tendency to seek mental relief from the barrage of self-referential sensory stimuli is what kept me sane during my time at Disney, the project itself kept me focused.

The Great Indoors

It is important to remember that the Wilderness Lodge is, in essence and in reality, only a hotel and while it is landscaped to resemble the Northwestern United States, it does not have a National Park outside the sliding glass front doors. The extreme attention to detail displayed at the Lodge is in keeping with the legendary detailing care taken virtually everywhere at Disney World. The measure of 'accuracy' achieved at the Lodge was obviously a point of pride with everyone connected with the Lodge. All of the informants that I spoke with who had active roles to play in the Lodge and/or its development spoke of the 'seamless' feeling of the Lodge, and were very proud of their contribution to this evocative and accurate atmosphere.

A brief history of the Lodge and its development are in order. Fort Wilderness Campground, which has provisions for tenting, recreational vehicles and guest cottages, has been one of the most popular guest accommodation sites at Disney World since opening day, and plans for some kind of extension to Fort Wilderness were in the works at Disney since the 1970's. The continuing popularity of Fort Wilderness, and the rise in popular interest in the environment, were deciding factors in proceeding with the Wilderness Lodge concept. The original design was for an Elizabethan-style inn and village with guest cabins, this was replaced by an idea which would "use natural materials and simple domestic forms, while recalling a past agrarian era in American history (to)

create a timeless quality and appeal" (Walt Disney Company 1981). In 1981, Cypress Point Lodge Resort was proposed. This design borrowed heavily from Teddy Roosevelt-style hunting lodges; "the large wooden structure offers a romantic notion of the turn of the century hunting lodge secluded in a deep forest. Neither the trees or the building dominate the area, they just blend together in a natural harmony" (Walt Disney Company 1981). The Wilderness Lodge as it now exists began development in 1989. While the notions of 'romance and natural harmony' have been retained in the new structure, they were expressed in a building designed with wilderness and the American frontier in mind. "Going back only 150 years, the west was an uncivilized wilderness where wildlife lived unchecked - except by the few Native American inhabitants and the occasional trapper. Disney's Wilderness Lodge provides a retreat to this earlier time and place" (Walt Disney Company 1989).

Walt Disney's Wilderness Lodge is one of Disney's Premium Resorts, the equivalent to a four-star hotel. The Lodge has 725 rooms, four restaurants and lounges, heated swimming pool, bike and boat rentals, laundry facilities and a small store. "Disney's Wilderness Lodge Resort is based upon a romantic vision that returns the visitor to the era of the Early West; the stage for the American epic where the sky was always blue, Indians were noble warriors, wild game roamed freely over wondrous landscapes, and the pioneer and the frontier were given heroic proportions..." (Walt Disney Company 1993:4). The cost for this 'romantic vision' starts at $154.00 a night, and so far the Lodge has been extremely successful; it has been almost fully booked since its opening. When I visited the Lodge in October, Disney's off-season, the Lodge was completely full and I was unable to get a room of heroic, or any other, proportions.

It is apparent that Disney consciously chooses to represent certain kinds of thought and expression about nature, wilderness and the culture of nature in the Wilderness Lodge. My visit to the Lodge, my discussions with its creators and caretakers, and my analysis of textual materials, have demonstrated that Disney takes the information which it has chosen to represent very seriously, and has carefully constructed a narrative about, and for, the Lodge which uncovers, enhances, highlights, illuminates and demonstrates the Disney culture of nature at every opportunity. This ideological work is done while the Lodge shelters you, entertains you and feeds you with that Disney touch, an all-encompassing, yet unobtrusive cocoon of authenticity, fantasy and good feeling.

The Lodge itself is impressive. As one turns off of the main highway and onto the road which leads to the Lodge, Timberline Drive, the atmosphere and surroundings change immediately, but subtly. The road curves and winds, the vegetation begins to change, the trees are taller and pine-like. Road signs are no longer made of the brightly coloured metal we see along the main road, here they are green and white, supported on stands made of bundles of three rough-hewn poles held together with metal bindings. Lamp posts also signal the change in atmosphere, and reflect a shift in time as well, for they appear to be made of opaque glass and tarnished copper, with a design reminiscent of art-deco naturalism. The main gate to the Lodge now appears around a curve in the road, constructed of stacks of logs supporting a stretched 'skin' arch painted with designs inspired by Native American art. The road divides in two, the centre meridian is planted with low scrub pine bushes and small redwood trees supported by unobtrusive poles and guy-wires. The road begins to incline slightly.

Rounding the corner just past the meridian, the Lodge itself comes into view for the first time, its green many-leveled roof and log walls, reminiscent of Tinker Toys, rising out of the trees. Passing by beds of wild flowers arranged in neat borders, you drive under a covered entry way to be greeted by a valet dressed in something that looks like a park ranger's uniform. You leave your car with one of these trusty looking rangers and are directed towards the entrance. The walls around the massive wooden doors appear to be built of huge blocks of granite. The wooden doors stand permanently open, and the double layer of glass sliding doors opens to let you into the cool, air conditioned lobby of the Lodge.

It takes a moment for your eyes to adjust to the light, which filters into the room as if through mountains and forest. The lobby is enormous. Over seven stories high, it is encircle by wooden balconies at each level. Huge stripped logs support the room at its perimeter, and bundles of logs topped by animal carvings reach for the timbered roof. At the far end of the lobby is a fireplace, its chimney nine stories of stratified rock formations. Two totem poles face each other from across the lobby, each reaching almost to the ceiling, decorated with carved and painted images familiar to those who have seen the carvings of the Native people of North America's Northwest Coast. The stone floor is rough granite around the room's perimeter, giving way in the centre to highly polished stone inlaid with designs suggesting Navajo and Hopi blanket patterns. Iron and stretched skin teepee-shaped light fixtures hang from the ceiling; the iron work depicts Native people on horseback pursuing buffalo. Several groups of Mission-style furniture are placed in the

central part of the room, sitting on rugs woven with Native-looking patterns. A replica of a Native American ceremonial headdress is displayed behind one of these groupings in a glass case; another glass case displays beadwork on pairs of moccasins, leather belts and bags.

Off to one side of the lobby is the reception desk. Made of stone, it is inlaid with geometric patterns in turquoise and brass. Behind the desk are nine glass recesses built into the log wall, in them are displayed reproductions of cradle boards, used by Native Americans of the Southwest to carry their infants children in. On another wall hangs a painted 'bear pelt'. This area is lit by miniature versions of the exterior glass and copper lamps. On the other side of the lobby is the Whispering Canyon Cafe, which features a 'cowboys and indians' design theme and serves family style meals of veal ribs, corn on the cob and buffalo burgers. Each of the four restaurants is themed differently: Territory Lounge is filled with the gear and spoils of exploration (maps, photographs, surveying equipment), Artist's Point (the higher priced dining room) is filled with reproduction paintings of nature from the turn of the century and a menu which leans heavily towards foods and wines from the Pacific Northwestern United States. Even the Roaring Forks Snack Bar and the Trout Pass Pool Bar play the theme game, as a rustic watering hole and a miniature Native long house, respectively.

Passing through the lobby and out into the central courtyard, flanked on three sides by the U-shaped Lodge, one follows the path of Silver Springs Creek. The creek's source is in the lobby itself, bubbling up through the stone floor. It passes out of the lobby and into the courtyard, dropping down into a small, graceful falls. Hugged on either side by wildflowers, the creek appears to run into the swimming pool and to be a source for both a hot and a cold spa (the occurrence of both a hot and a cold pool side by side from the same source is not explained). From the pool area the creek picks up again, and running under a wooden walkway, finally culminates in the spray of the one hundred and eighty foot 'Fire Rock Geyser' at the edge of the lake; this computer controlled piece of Disney 'imagineering' goes off every hour on the hour. The wooden walkway serves as an observation site for the lake and the geyser, and there is also a rocky, rough-hewn observation point mid-way between the lobby and the lake which overlooks the pool and the courtyard.

My main informant at Disney told me a wonderful story about the geyser. When the concept and initial design for the Wilderness Lodge were presented to the president of

Disney, he felt that the project lacked the necessary Disney touch in the form of some kind of large display of the technological wizardry that is Disney's trademark. When the idea of the geyser was put forward, it was an instant success among the Disney executives. After many long months of designing and constructing the geyser, which involved such things as filming Old Faithful and viewing the footage frame by frame to get the sequence of events right, the construction of three different water systems below the pool/geyser area and the programming of the computer systems to control the geyser, it was ready to be shown to upper management. When the geyser failed to go off at the right time, the assembled company became impatient when left waiting for the ten minutes it took to get the computers up and running. My informant contrasted this impatience with park visitors who go to see Old Faithful; they wait patiently for the natural geyser to go off in its own time, yet want a geyser on demand when they know that it is possible. We have the technology!

The materials used in building the Lodge would seem to be wood and stone, but the majority of what looks like wood and stone is actually carefully molded, coloured, and sometimes hand painted, concrete. The massive stone blocks which seem to make up the foundations of the building are concrete, as are the rocks out of which are 'carved' the Observation Point and steps. These rocks, and those that artfully surround the geyser, are in fact hand painted concrete attempting to look completely natural, right down to painted-on lichen, mold and algae stains (these artificial stains now compete with the real thing). The geyser itself is a highly complex, computerized water-theatre which is connected to the three different water systems which service the pool area. Nothing is what it seems to be at first glance, or upon closer examination.

The guest rooms also reflect the theme of the Lodge. The bedspreads look like patchwork quilts, the furniture is reproduction mission-style and the art on the walls are reproductions of turn of the century nature paintings, minus dead animals or humans in conflict with one another. Each room contains a wooden wardrobe, its large front doors painted with a forest scene, complete with the baby bear from the Lodge's logo. Specialty rooms include the Presidential Suite, which is decorated in the Adirondack style according to the wishes of Disney's president, Michael Eisner, who grew up in New York state and wanted his version of wilderness to be included in the Lodge (Informant 1994). The hotel gift shop, The Mercantile, also embraces the 'great outdoors' theme and prominently displays books about U.S. National Parks, outdoor clothing (most of which is unsuitable in the Florida heat), reproduction miniature totem poles (made in Canada), Indian head dresses, cowboy

hats, guns and plastic Indian dolls for kids and all manner of products which can be associated with environmentalism and the outdoors. Less prominently displayed is the Disney paraphernalia that one can find anywhere on the property, with the Lion King merchandise leading the pack here (pun intended), as elsewhere in the park.

The theme of the Lodge is carried out in minute detail everywhere possible. The main floor bathrooms have Native-inspired designs on the wall paper. The concrete paths around the outside of the building have animal prints impressed into them. A small lake on the side of the Lodge has the outline of a buffalo planted into it with cattails; this bit of horticultural art can be viewed from rooms on that side. At the front entrance are two topiary figures of buffalo, an adult and a baby. The piped-in music which plays both in the lobby and in the courtyard is largely made up of themes from western movies, with a little light bluegrass thrown in for variety. These details are not taken lightly, by either Disney staff or guests. Disney people take pride in these details, and guests at Disney World make a game of seeking out Disney's smallest attempts at realism.

Cast members: Disney informants

My main informant for this project was closely involved in the Wilderness Lodge project from the start of his term at Disney in 1989. In order to preserve his anonymity I will call him Stan (all informant names have been changed). Stan is a Director in the Disney Development Company, an arm of Disney which deals with aspects of project development within Disney's vast holdings. Stan's division deals specifically with Disney World. Involved in the Wilderness Lodge project from early on, Stan was more than cooperative with me on this project. He is passionate about the Wilderness Lodge as a Disney flagship hotel and as a new, environmentally aware, direction in Disney themes. He arranged for the Lodge's 'design team' to spend six weeks traveling together through the northwestern United States, visiting National Parks and Lodges, in order to experience the theme that Disney wanted to portray in the Wilderness Lodge first hand. This experience created a bond between the participants on the Wilderness Lodge project, and gave each member of the team a certain personal engagement with the project. Stan and the other members of this original team that I spoke to all expressed strong feelings for the project and the team. They also all held previous 'wilderness experience' in common; all of them had spent time in wilderness areas either as children and/or with their families, and held these experiences in high regard. They all expressed a desire to recreate these experiences through the Lodge, and to share this experience with others through the Lodge and, perhaps more

importantly, impart the feelings they associated with the experience of wilderness with guests of the Lodge.

I contacted Stan about six months before my visit to Disney World. Once I had decided on this project, I began by telephoning Disney World in an attempt to get some initial information regarding the Lodge and whom I might speak to about it. Being that the Disney Corporation is huge, the first dozen or so people I spoke to had no idea whom I should speak to, and shuffled me off to the legal department, advertising and casting (what Disney calls its personnel division). I finally spoke to someone who knew the name of the primary architect on the Wilderness Lodge project, and I called him at his offices in Denver. He gave me Stan's name, and I was finally able to reach him at Disney Development. He was immediately helpful, and we began an exchange of letters, faxes and phone calls in aid of setting up my field work. I spoke with Stan at length about my project and what sort of information I thought I would need to gather, and the kind of people I wanted to speak to. Reflecting both his own generosity and Disney's need to control what happens in their domain, Stan hand-picked and arranged interviews with informants for me. Before I left for the airport, he faxed me a schedule of appointments, and a list of other people that I might wish to contact. The range of people was wide, and while in the field I spoke to managers, an environmental engineer, and one of the directors of Discovery Island, to name a few. I was also allowed to go through archival material, detailing the development of the Wilderness Lodge idea, and even got to see landscaping and sewage blueprints for the Lodge.

Stan was the first person that I met with during my field study. He spent an entire day with me, going over the development, planning and building of the Lodge, taking me on an extensive tour of the Lodge, and showing me the other hotels on Disney World property. Involved in every aspect of the planning and development of the Lodge, down to drawing the baby buffalo image for some of the iron-work, Stan feels a strong connection with the project and what it stands for. As a child he spent time with his family traveling through America's National Parks, and wants to share this experience with others through the Wilderness Lodge. Stan was a visionary for the Wilderness Lodge project, and he placed primary importance on getting the right 'feeling' for the Lodge, in order for guests to have an accurate, 'real' experience. As Stan put it, "we worked in subconscious things that people will never get (notice), but they know that it feels right" (interview 1994). As an example of this, Stan talked about the things they did to the landscape to create the feeling of the northwest. For example, you ascend to the Lodge, which is built to look as if it

stands on a hill. The lobby is actually on the second floor, so the view of the lake actually looks over the lake. This lake view in unobstructed, you see only the lake and islands, not the Magic Kingdom or any other Disney construction; "this mimics the long views you get out west" (interview 1994).

Another important informant during my field study was the current General Manager of Disney's Wilderness Lodge. 'Eric' was not part of the original design team, but was brought on to the project when the Lodge was already under construction. Much of our conversation centred on guest experiences and perceptions of the Lodge, and on what Disney wishes to provide with themed experience. Eric spoke of the success of the Lodge as a themed experience, and he emphasized the idea that the Lodge is intended to be a world unto itself in which people can relax and feel a certain 'warmth'. He credits the success of the Lodge to the landscape elements incorporated into the overall design, and the fact that the Lodge is removed physically and visually from the rest of the park. Eric also said that Americans "have a mysticism for the west, and the popularity of that idea is going to help make this resort be very, very popular" (interview 1994).

Another key informant who spoke eloquently of this mysticism was the original General Manager on the Wilderness Lodge project and part of the original design team. He is now the General Manager of Disney's Polynesian Resort. Like Stan, 'Bill' spent time with his family camping, fishing and hiking, both as a child and as an adult. His diverse background includes landscape design, farming and cattle ranching, giving him a uniquely 'hands-on' experience with the outdoors and with the relationship between humans and nature. While Bill's primary task was to make to Lodge "not just nice looking, but functional" (interview 1994), he took to heart the experiences of nature and wilderness that he shared with family and with the design team, and made sure that the function fit well with the spirit of the Lodge. As the person with the longest career at Disney that I spoke to, Bill was able to offer insight into the corporate memory of Disney regarding landscaping and themed experience; "Walt always told the story through landscape, through the painting, through the signs, through the scale of the elements, it's part of the Disney legacy" (interview 1994). He spoke of his desire to share the experience of nature and wilderness with others, and his feeling that the Wilderness Lodge will do this in some small way.

While visiting the Lodge itself was an awesome experience and constitutes the core of my field data, my interviews with informants did much to impress upon me the personal

investment made by the people who created it. Their experience of the Lodge goes beyond that of the average visitor, and will stay with them as a very special memory throughout their lives. In doing this study I wish to in no way undermine their experience or their feelings for the Lodge, the project and their teamwork. I do wish to use my data, both observations and interviews, to point to and explore some of the larger issues that I have identified at Disney World and at Disney's Wilderness Lodge.

Chapter III
"Don't just stay. Explore": Nature, wilderness and the frontier

> "Nearly a century after the first explorers carved their way into the frontier west, adventurous guests of the Walt Disney World Resort can experience Wilderness Lodge, a tribute to the great lodges of the early 20th century. From its grand entrance hall and Northwest artisan style guest rooms to its waterfall, geyser, and scenic vistas, Disney's newest resort was made to be explored. And, like a Walt Disney World theme park, there are new adventures to be discovered around every corner" (Walt Disney Company 1993).

As I found during my field observations and interviews, ideas about nature, wilderness and the frontier as they are defined by American culture and society are at the heart of Disney's Wilderness Lodge. Disney takes these ideas and tells them in story form at the Wilderness Lodge, creating a myth, a Disney-version, of the ideas themselves, as well as representing them physically. In this chapter, I will describe this myth-making, and its roots in the historical-cultural construction of ideas about nature, wilderness and the frontier. I will also explore some of the other versions of nature offered by Disney, and discuss some of the implications of Disney's nature stories.

The Silver Creek Star

Disney conveys its messages through story-telling, and the overriding story told at the Lodge is of the untamed American frontier and the men (and occasionally the women) who tamed it, brought it under their ideological dominion and their physical control, and gave it meaning through the creation and development of narratives. To tell this story, Disney creates a myth of the Lodge and tells it in the Lodge newsletter, "The Silver Creek Star". The newsletter explains the genesis of the Lodge "Wilderness Lodge Established to Preserve Beauty" (Walt Disney Company 1994:2), and the story is told of the fictional Colonel Ezekiel Moreland who, upon reading the accounts of the American West by Lewis and Clark, set off for western parts unknown with "a party of 50 men, consisting of naturalists, old soldiers and topographers, and began the arduous journey into the frontier" (Walt Disney Company 1994:1). A true adventurer and individualist, Colonel Moreland carries on alone when his 50 men refuse to continue after being frightened by a buffalo stampede; "I take to the wilderness alone...(t)he good earth will provide me with everything I need to survive...I have my gun, I have my courage and I have my

determination..." (Walt Disney Company 1994:1). It is Colonel Moreland who 'discovers' and names Silver Creek Springs, and requests that his art-curator daughter Genevieve come out west to join him in the creation of the Wilderness Lodge. The Moreland's founded the Lodge and "established a preservation area...where others could enjoy the natural beauty of the wilderness" (Walt Disney Company 1994:2). The Lodge grew up around the spring and the Colonel's 'original' cabin still stands, "a testimony to his spirit and the beauty of the wilderness" (Walt Disney Company 1994:2).

"The Silver Creek Star", while first a forum for Disney to tell its myth about the Lodge, is also a formal textual representation of Disney's views on nature, wilderness and the frontier; this is where one can begin to tease out what these concepts mean to, and how they are used by, Disney. Their version of The West at the turn of the century, for example, portrays it as an untamed, uninhabited wilderness, a place with limitless resources waiting to be harnessed by individuals with courage and stamina. The newsletter is the place where Disney spells it out, albeit in the form of legend, that preserving the natural beauty of wilderness is the primary reason for National Parks. The importance of wilderness and its preservation in the shaping of the American national character are implied throughout the newsletter, and this character is contrasted with the characters of foreigners and Native peoples. Also highlighted is the role of beauty in determining the value of wilderness, and the transformative power of this beauty into an artistic movement which shaped the views of a nation, and eventually the world. It is these national and international views of the American West which Disney represents at the Wilderness Lodge, for the edification of the public and the profit of the Disney Company.

"The untamed frontier! There was a mysterious vastness to it that was deeply intimidating and yet serenely inviting!" (Walt Disney Company 1994:1). This is the first characterization of the frontier that appears in "The Silver Creek Star", and its thematic content is consistently portrayed throughout the rest of the paper, and in virtually every detail of the Lodge itself. The frontier is vast and wild, its mysteries fathomed only by "the wild creatures who inhabited it, the wolves, woolly mountain goats, bighorn sheep and the eagles (who) knew the secrets of this strange land" (Walt Disney Company 1994:1). By definition it is unpopulated, which really means that White Americans have not yet brought it under their civilizing influence through settlement. The bounty and beauty of the land were legendary, yet real, "no myth could outdo...its magnificent splendor" (Walt Disney Company 1994:1). The picture that Disney draws of the Western frontier is of a place that is separate from the civilized East, a place that offers opportunities for those with the

initiative and courage needed to tame this untamed place. It is a place which is clearly Other; "(i)t was a wild land and it was strange" (Walt Disney Company 1994:1).

This strange land attracts a new breed of person, those such as Colonel Moreland who have what it takes to go it alone. The rugged individualist, one who makes his fortune alone, with only the basic necessities at hand; "(w)hat need I of anything else...?" ('Colonel Moreland' in Walt Disney Company 1994:1). "With the characteristic response of a true mountain man,...the Colonel left the civilized world behind" (Walt Disney Company 1994:1) in his pursuit of the richness and beauty of the wild, untamed frontier. Once this goal has been seen, claimed and named (Silver Creek Springs), Moreland is determined to bring civilization to the wilderness, and sets about inviting his daughter to create a community of "artists, scientists and nature lovers of all kinds" (Walt Disney Company 1994:2). Ezekiel Moreland's brand of courage and individual initiative in the face of the dangers of the wild is written about with great reverence by the Disney Company, and the qualities that he possessed are shown to be those which made America great.

Moreland's appreciation for the beauty of the frontier is also reflected in the story told by Disney about the Lodge, in which the representation of the artistic movement which went along with the opening up of the Western frontier plays an important role. Using the fictional Moreland's daughter's position as an art curator (did such a woman exist at the turn of the century?), Disney is able to tie the artistic representation of the frontier in as a part of the experience of the West, and of the Lodge. It is the challenge of the frontier which drives explorers to claim it, but it is the beauty of the frontier which captures their hearts. It was the representation of this beauty in the paintings of Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Moran and Karl Bodmer which "inspired the imagination of an entire nation" (Walt Disney Company 1994:2). The Wilderness Lodge story cites the involvement of Frederich Alonzo Gustaf a "rather eccentric foreigner...(who was)...consumed with the passion to capture on canvas the romantic new land" (Walt Disney Company 1994:2). The power of these representations has helped to create a vision of the West in the American mind which endures today, and Disney uses this vision to create and sustain the Wilderness Lodge.

That this beauty and this vision must be preserved seemed obvious to the fictional Morelands, and Disney uses them to make a case for the preservation of wilderness through the setting aside of areas deemed worthy; "it was the combination of (Genevieve's) artistic nature and her father's love of the land that would create one of the first wilderness preservation areas in the West" (Walt Disney Company 1994:2). By identifying National

Parks specifically, and creating a link between the Wilderness Lodge and American National Parks, Disney evokes an important national symbol. This link is reinforced throughout the Lodge in its architecture, the Lodge logo, the costumes of the Lodge staff and the National Park literature found in the Lodge's gift shop. The Lodge is advertised as a monument to American National Parks, and attempts to replicate the spirit of National Parks on both physical and psychological levels.

Unpacking the narrative constructed by Disney about the Wilderness Lodge brings the themes chosen by Disney to be represented in the Lodge into focus. The story told about the Lodge emphasizes themes and values familiar to Disney guests and observers: progress, individualism, universalism and the inherent right of humans to dominate the earth for our own ends. These themes in turn start to reveal some of the more troubling issues raised by the Wilderness Lodge and its representations of wilderness, nature and the frontier, issues about reality and nature, the meaning of wilderness and the frontier and the commodification of all of these by the Disney Company. The pervasiveness of artificiality and the erosion of authentic experience in the face of created nature are at the centre of this discussion, for the creation of the Wilderness Lodge and its narrative as represented in "The Silver Creek Star" reveal Disney's ability to create nature not only through the judicious planting of redwood trees, but through the artificial employment of deeply rooted cultural constructs, emblems and symbols.

The construction of nature

Anthropology holds that nature is a culturally constructed concept; that every culture creates their own explanation of what nature is. Disney World, then, reflects a certain culturally-bounded construction of nature and wilderness. In order to explore what Disney says about nature, some background on what nature *is* at a conceptual level in the North American mind is necessary. The key in determining the relationship that North Americans have with nature is its separateness from human beings, and from civilization. After a long process of thought and action, Western Europeans, and eventually North Americans of European descent, have conceived of ourselves as living apart from nature in physical and psychological ways; "(t)he separation of humankind from nature's embrace began long ago with the Neolithic turn and the advent of civilization in Sumeria and Egypt" (Oelschlaeger 1991:95). This process was continued in the Classical and Christian traditions, and was further enhanced by the scientific and industrial revolutions. The culmination of these events in Modernism eventually "complete(d) the intellectual divorce of humankind from nature".

This divorce, however great its impact has been, was lengthy and contentious. Oelschlaeger contends that modern, Western ideas about wilderness and nature, drawing on more ancient traditions, began to take shape in Europe during the Middle Ages. Guided primarily by Judeo-Christian biblical interpretations, "the medieval mind conceived of nature as an earthly abode over which humankind had been given dominion by a beneficent God" (Oelschlaeger 1991:70). "Acting out their beliefs, medieval people altered the environment" (Oelschlaeger 1991:70) in ways which they thought to be consistent with God's divine plan. The idea that God desired people to rule nature combined with a fear of the pagan worship of nature and led to the demonization of wilderness and the intense transformation of landscapes in order to bring them under human, and therefore God's, control. "(T)aming the wilderness...fulfilled God's plan, simultaneously exercising human dominion over nature and exterminating paganism" (Oelschlaeger 1991:72). These changes to the landscape and in ideology brought about massive transformations to social life and methods of subsistence illustrated by the rise in, almost oppositionally, permeable and somewhat secular urban settlements and cloistered religious communities (Oelschlaeger 1991:73).

The periods which followed the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Reformation, brought about further developments in thinking about nature and wilderness. Spurred on in part by exploration and the demands of population increases, these periods were characterized by a looking back to the thoughts, forms and ideals of the Classical period, and combining them with the Christian tradition in a radical new ways. Marked by the rise of the status of the individual, the demand for secular government and the belief that economic success indicated God's favour, these periods allowed ideas about nature and wilderness to be seen from new perspectives. Protestantism, with its emphasis on individual wealth, was especially influential on these perspectives, "(w)holesale exploitation of the naturally given ensued, for the Protestant goal was to capitalize on nature as rapidly and prosperously as possible" (Oelschlaeger 1991:75).

Oelschlaeger identifies several pivotal thinkers during this long period of social, spiritual and intellectual upheaval: Thomas Aquinas, Galileo Galilei, Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, Rene Descartes, Adam Smith. These people contributed to transforming concepts of the world, and therefore nature, by reflecting the attitudes and ideas of the time, and by creating new attitudes and ideas. Perhaps more importantly, they developed and tested these new concepts using some form of what we now call the scientific method. "Galileo's

new science, Bacon's new logic, Descartes's mechanistic reductionism and Newton's physics are central....(c)ollectively they represent a *paradigm shift* so radical that the very meaning of the word *nature* was changed" (Oelschlaeger 1991:76-77).

The culmination of all of these factors, the invention of science, mechanistic reductionism, the ideal of economic progress through consumption, was Modernism. "Modernism...effected an ideological conversion of the wilderness into material nature, both as an object of scientific inquiry and as the means to fuel economic progress. Modernism thus underlies the emergence of a profound homocentrism" (Oelschlaeger 1991:69). The ideals of Modernism, particularly "the intellectual divorce of humankind from nature" (Oelschlaeger 191:96) have become central to Western culture, shaping virtually every aspect of life. While there have been challenges to the ideology of Modernism, it is the overriding ideology which shaped European, and therefore North American, ideas about and values of wilderness and nature. Changes to these ideals are taking place, but Modernist ideas about nature and wilderness serve the interests of corporations like Disney, and are therefore at the heart of the images of nature and wilderness, civilization and culture, that Disney represent to the public.

Frontierland: The North American perspective.

The exploratory fever which fueled the European exploration, and eventual settlement, of the New World was part of both the development and the project of Modernism. The notion of Progress was particularly influential, and areas of life from trade and production to cross-cultural understanding were coloured by the belief in Progress, or the logical progression of things in a predictable direction. One of the predictable directions of the time, economic and industrial expansion, meant a need for trade routes, and raw materials; this need contributed to European exploration of the globe on a grand scale, and to the eventual 'discovery' and settlement of the New World.

Europeans coming to unknown places brought European ideas and concepts with them, and it was no wonder that with regards to land and nature they were stunned by the 'untamed wilderness' they encountered in North America; it was unlike anything they had experienced before. "(B)y the fifteenth century, when the West's exploratory probes beyond its geographical confines took on the earnestness of design, the civilization was possessed of deep-set, long established attitudes toward the wilderness..., toward those who lived in the wilderness, and toward the relationship of 'civilization' to these" (Turner 1980:21-22). While they saw the economic potential of such seemingly endless, unused

land, they also felt a spiritual imperative to bring it under control. While ideas about the separation of nature from humans, and therefore from God, were being developed, most still believed that the new people they encountered must be brought the word of God, and the land that they lived on must reflect that word by being brought under human dominion in the name of God. The twin reasons for exploration, trade and missionary zeal, both had physical and conceptual effects on the land, as well as on the people (Turner 1980:86).

Part of the this missionary zeal reflected ideas about possession in the Old and New Testaments. While sanctioned religious or spiritual possession had a place in the early Christian tradition, unsanctioned possession by evil became a later focus. These possessions by evil spirits were originally associated with pagan wilderness cults in the Old World and fear of this type of possession was renewed by European encounters with New World inhabitants who seemed to display demonic possession during spiritual rituals. It may have seemed that the wilderness itself had the power to possess humans, and early Christian colonists strongly resisted this temptation in their interactions with the land and with the people (Turner 1980:238-243). Colonists, especially the English, had an intense fear of 'going native', particularly through intermarriage or community living with the Native people of the New World, and both of these things were strongly discouraged (Turner 1980:240-243). In order to resist possession by the wilderness, the land itself was to be possessed in a way the colonists could understand; "(t)he thing to do was to take possession without becoming possessed: to take secure hold on the lands beyond and yet hold them at a rigidly maintained spiritual distance" (Turner 1980:238). This spiritual distance alludes to the heart of the colonist's fear, which at its most basic was the realization that the wilderness is as much inside the human spirit as it is outside in the world.

This well-defined distance was influenced by another aspect of the budding frontier mentality among the colonizers of the New World. According to the reports of early travelers, the New World was a place of almost unimaginable abundance, fruit fairly dripped from the trees, game came easily to the hunter, and timber was always near at hand. Caught up in Modernist ideas of Progress, use-value and industry, Old World settlers were horrified to find that this overwhelming wealth and abundance was little used by the New World inhabitants. It was, they thought, being wasted, squandered and therefore not appropriately appreciated as God's gift to Christians. This untamed wilderness, "like the Indians and wild life (it) sheltered, stood in the way, not only of Progress,...but of deeper notions of order and light" (Turner 1980:258). To bring it under

control was to do God's work, and would further the possession of the land without being possessed by the land; "this was a world the whites wanted not as it was but only as they might remake it" (Turner 1980:257).

In carrying out God's work, the North American continent and its original inhabitants were changed forever: "what underlay our clearing of the continent were ancient fears and divisions that we brought to the New World along with the primitive precursors of the technology that would assist in transforming the continent" (Turner 1980:255). This transformation was undertaken with a frenzied drive that belied ideas of Progress and limitless possibilities; the seemingly endless bounty of the Americas meant that "there were *no limits to what could be done to America...*" (Turner 1980:262). European settlement of North America, driven by spiritual, economic and ideological forces, quickly became "the din of limitless growth and exploitation" (Turner 1980:269). This din culminated in the 'winning of the West', as Europeans desired more and more land, relentlessly pushing further and further west to the coast of the Pacific Ocean; "this final episode is in reality a commentary on Western Civilization that is as ironic as it is tragic" (Turner 1980:273). The tragedy lies in the demolition of the landscape of an entire continent and the destruction of the lives and lifeways of countless Native New World peoples. The irony lies in the hope in which this project was undertaken, the New World was to be the New Eden, in which the mistakes made in Europe might have been redeemed. Instead, when it was already too late, American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson "sensed that the story of the New World was going to be the story of the Old World again; that there would be no fresh beginning here but only a brutal monument to meretriciousness and emptiness of spirit" (Turner 1980:269-270). In their quest to possess, "Americans were determin(ed) that there should be no limits, no wilderness left unfathomed" (Turner 1980:271), thereby destroying the very things which filled them with such amazement at first contact with the continent. What once seemed a spiritual imperative is viewed in retrospect as unthinking avariciousness with profoundly tragic results; the birth, exploration, exploitation and demise of the American frontier.

Fantasyland: The myth the frontier

In discussing the idea of the frontier, Frederick Turner highlights spiritual and narrative elements, particularly the role of myth in shaping ideas about nature and wilderness. He feels that "the real story of the coming of European civilization to the wildernesses of the world is a spiritual story...the story of a civilization that had substituted history for myth as a way of understanding life" (Turner 1980:xi), with drastic consequences. "It was

precisely this substitution that enabled Europeans to explore the most remote places of the globe, to colonize them, and to impose their values on the native populations" (Turner 1980:xi). The combined force of entrenched attitudes and mythical/historical confusion proved a strong motivation for colonization, exploitation and cultural imperialism.

For Turner, "mythology is the ultimate technology" (Turner 1980:14). Myth is a necessary, integral part of being human which allows for symbolic understanding of the world both inside and outside. This symbolic understanding is in turn a way of contacting reality, not of ignoring it. Mythical and symbolic representations may be said to show a degree of control over reality; in the transfer from object (thing) to subject (story) the observer becomes a narrator, a role in which it is possible to have some degree of control over the story being told, represented, understood or mythologized; "one of the better ways of defining myth might be as a strategy of control" (Turner 1980:20). Maps are an example of "attempts to 'control'... territories by representing them" (Turner 1980:91). Turner claims that "(t)his view logically leads to the conclusion that *all* men desire to control the natural world...what separates the savage from the civilized is that whereas the former tried to master the world by talking to it and imitating it in graphics and dance, the latter moved beyond such pathetic attempts to the invention and employment of extra-somatic means that actually achieved the desired results" (Turner 1980:20-21).

While employing these 'extra-somatic means', the notion of myth and the telling of stories about the natural world were not given up, for they still helped to make sense of that world and the human relationships with it. An early example of these stories within the frontier context are captivity narratives, in which a white European settler is captured by natives and lives to tell the story of their confinement and life among them. At the heart of these narratives is a "fear of going native" (Turner 1980:236), and they illustrate the spiritual and physical struggle to avoid this abased state. "(T)he captivity narrative was the perfect scripture for a civilization's sense of its encounter with the wilderness for in the redemption that rounded it out there was a triumph, an ultimate mastering of everything the wilderness and its natives could throw up in the way of opposition and temptation" (Turner 1980:236).

The myth of the frontier had lasting physical and psychological effects on the history and development of America. Both the idea and the reality of expansion into the frontier have influenced American institutions and character; "(t)he existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development" (Jackson Turner 1893:345). The frontier "furnish(ed) the forces dominating

American character" (Jackson Turner 1893:345), and promoted democracy and individualism by requiring self-reliance for survival. Jackson Turner claims that the environment itself promoted a relationship which built a certain kind of character; "(T)he stubborn American environment is there with its imperious summons to accept it conditions...and yet in spite of the environment..each frontier did indeed furnish a new field of opportunity" (Jackson Turner 1893:347). It was this tendency to accomplish things 'in spite of the environment' which define the frontier mentality, and Disney adopts this story and carries it into the twenty-first century.

Adventureland: National Parks and American identity.

The formation of parks, particularly national parks, has had a profound and lasting influence on North American relationships with nature. In order to find an identity separate from that of their European ancestors, many non-indigenous Americans turned to the landscape around them for inspiration. The formation of national parks had a role in this process, for they were a very public way in which the American people, through their governing bodies, indicated that certain landscapes were integral to America's uniqueness, and should be set aside in order to demonstrate the essence of America, and allow the American people to enjoy their landscape. The first such area set aside, Yosemite, became "fixed in the national consciousness as an icon of American culture" (Runte 1990:16). "In Yosemite Valley, America came closer to ending its long and frustrating search for a distinctive national identity" (Runte 1990:15).

At their inception American "parks were meant to protect spectacles of nature - geysers, waterfalls, and huge trees - and promote them as the virtuous attributes of a young nation lacking the constructed marvels of the Old World" (Graber 1995:123). These virtuous attributes were readily combined with other attributes of American life, including commercial interests, even while they were masked under the rubric of accessibility. "In the process of transforming Yosemite Valley from natural wonder to icon, Americans naturally assumed that its development for tourism was both legitimate and necessary" (Runte 1990:17). The tension between preservation and use in national parks which began here continues to this day. "Observation, not preservation, was the oldest pursuit. Too late Americans realized that seeing was not saving and that making observation easier exacted a price" (Runte 1990:12).

"National parks are established not only for natural features but for cultural ones as well" (Graber 1995:132); in recognizing these cultural features we can acknowledge the 'cultural

landscape' of national parks. It is this cultural landscape which Disney recreates in the Wilderness Lodge by identifying and reproducing some of the essential elements of the national park experience. While Disney's Wilderness Lodge may seem to be the antithesis of what national parks stand for, the protection of wild spaces from human use or development, it can also be seen as a new representation of some of the values inherent in the cultural landscapes of national parks, values like management and use. Parks are meant to be used for recreation and tourism, as is Disney World, and while the spectacles they feature may be different, they are both 'vacation destinations'. Both parks and Disney World stand apart from the world of the everyday, in particular the world of work, in very well-defined ways; "wilderness parks and other designated wildernesses are the closest thing we have to markers against which we can judge the world we have invented nearly everywhere else" (Graber 1995:133-134). While parks appear to demarcate the constructed world, Disney separates itself from the 'real' world of work and home to another invented world of fantasy. It is also crucial to Disney's ability to make the Wilderness Lodge work that the parks have always been managed in one way or another; parks "now function...to provide solitude and counterpoint to technological society in a landscape that is *managed* to reveal as few traces of the passage of other humans as possible" (Graber 1995:124). Disney World, which is highly technological itself, perhaps needed a place managed to hide the passage of people, and the Wilderness Lodge is well engineered to achieve this goal. Carefully situated on one of Disney World's lakes, the Lodge is out of sight of other Disney developments, while still 'only moments away from the magic kingdom'. The recognition that parks are managed makes Disney's management of the Wilderness Lodge less surprising, as long as Disney World and Disney's Wilderness Lodge are viewed as cultural landscapes rather than natural ones. In creating and managing the Wilderness Lodge, the Disney Company has taken ideas which are familiar to most Americans as belonging to parks and transplanted them to privately owned Florida soil. Disney's ability to do this is due to both the status of American national parks as 'cultural icons' and to Disney's long-standing media campaign of revisionist nature television programming.

Nature, the Disney version.

As noted in the introduction, Disney World is a world of stories and themes, and nature is another theme which is represented through story-telling and given meaning through narrative at Walt Disney World. Disney's Wilderness Lodge is the latest in a series of attempts by Disney to capture the essence of nature and present it in an extraordinary form in their theme parks. The nature that is represented is, like virtually everything else touched by Disney, wrapped in a story, and the Lodge is no exception. Like the other attractions

and resorts at Disney World, the Wilderness Lodge has its own legends, is part of the overall Disney story about nature, and also exists as part of a larger narrative, the Disney version, about the ideology which defines Disney's world.

This ideological basis for the narratives constructed and presented at Disney World are apparent in the stories that Disney chooses to tell about nature, and the ways in which the relationships between people and the 'natural world' are represented. Disney chooses to represent nature in a way which is familiar to most North American visitors to Disney World; nature is seen as something separate from humans and culture, it is seen as an adversary of sorts which must be forced to reveal 'her' secrets and made to work for 'our' benefit. The view of nature which Disney shows its guests is one which is rooted in the relationship that the non-indigenous American people, as a nation, have with 'their' land, particularly the idea of the frontier as central to the building of the nation in a physical and a spiritual, psychological sense.

The Disney version of nature has significantly influenced popular North American conceptions of nature, wilderness and landscape; "(o)ur ways of thinking about and altering our landscapes these last forty years or so have been shaped and framed by the (Disney) narrative" (Wilson 1991:118). Disney's highly popular wildlife movies of the 1950's and 1960's gave a visual and conceptual framework for looking at, and thinking about, nature to several generations of North Americans, a framework which draws heavily on the ideas developed and employed by the New World's early settlers. In doing so they draw an important link between these ideas and the present day, signaling a logical progression from the ideas of the colonists to those of the frontier cowboys and prairie pioneers up to the present day thinking of current pioneers in industry, science and business. Disney stories about nature presented in these films were "transparent allegories of progress, paeans to the official cult of exploration, industrial development and an ever-rising standard of living" (Wilson 1991:118). Wilson argues that Disney's representations of nature closely followed political, economic and social trends of the day, happy nuclear families of beaver building bigger and better dams.

All of this thinly-disguised proselytizing was done using film, a highly organized medium which relies on creating the story by artificial means, the most obvious being the ability to edit visual material; the arrangement of visual material which is viewed cinematically creates powerful impressions, for the viewer cannot re-read or re-view easily. Even while knowing that these stories were the creation of Disney, the public believed, and continues

to believe, that because what is represented is somewhere out there in nature (and even this 'fact' is arguable), it must have some truth to it. The voice-over tells us that the beavers are a happy, nuclear family, so they must be, I can see that they are with my own eyes, the film shows it to me.

Why does this work, what sustains these contradictions? Wilson cites two reasons, the first being the fact that you see it with 'your own eyes'. "Most popular representations of nature are organized around the eye, an organ that is itself surrounded by ideologies encouraging a separation of the human individual from the natural world" (Wilson 1991:121). The other reason lies in Disney's use of the boundaries already set up between humans and the natural world; "(t)he contradiction that Disney's work flaunted - this is nature as she really is even though we've staged it all - only works if the culture draws a sharp distinction between the human and the non-human" (Wilson 1991:124).

This distinction is used by Disney again and again, and was reinforced by the period in which these movies were first produced. "Disney's early work had coincided with a momentous change in human demography" (Wilson 1991:131), namely the urbanization and suburbanization of America. These trends encouraged a highly bounded relationship with nature, in which the lines between city, country and wilderness were clearly drawn. The suburb was an added form of landscape which combined the city park with a slightly more open country aspect, but still served to emphasis the control of nature with its large expanses of labour intensive lawns and neat borders of shrubs and flowers. "Nature was newly out of reach for most North Americans. Disney's wildlife movies were one way in which the culture reintroduced the idea of nature into everyday life..." (Wilson 1991:131). It was not a coincidence that these movies were produced during a time of a resurgence of visitation to America's National Parks.

The new version in the swamp

If Disney's earlier representations of nature truly "functioned as a bucolic idyll for a popular culture saturated with images of technology and the domination of nature" (Wilson 1991:131), as Wilson claims, how do the representations given at Disney's Wilderness Lodge function with reference to current cultural understandings of nature and wilderness? As the latest update from Disney on how to think about and experience nature, what is the Wilderness Lodge trying say?

It is important to recognize the continuity in the representations, before looking at the differences between later and current attempts by Disney to present nature. The Wilderness Lodge is, for the most part, continuous with Disney's earlier representations of nature, it embraces and expresses the same themes, concepts, ideals and ideas, but represents them in an integrated and involving way. For example, the Wilderness Lodge still encourages a tangible separation between nature and humans, and it repeats patterns of the physical separation of urban areas, the country, and wilderness. The proof for this is that the Lodge *works*, it does not seem out of place at Disney World, nor does it appear to be out of step with other Disney representations which specifically address nature. Disney has been careful to make sure that where the Lodge does take on 'new' ideas they are incorporated with the old ones, Disney represents the new as an expansion of knowledge, the logical progression of natural and social science, not a radical revision of conceptual or ideological frameworks gained from new theoretical as well as practical knowledge.

Another function of the Lodge comes from the incorporation of these 'new' ideas and concepts; in order to incorporate them into their overriding corporate and commercial framework, Disney must get a handle on them, and submerge them into the Disney-version as quickly as possible. The resurgent interest in Native American culture and a new willingness to listen to Native viewpoints, for example, has Disney embellishing the Wilderness Lodge with Native artifacts and producing the movie Pocahontas as a 'classic American folktale'. These representations present a perspective which has become culturally important in the public arena, but on Disney's terms, thereby continuing their ideological monopoly.

These representations continue Disney's work of representing nature as a theme, and giving nature meaning through narrative and myth. If Frederick Turner is right, and the control of symbolic understanding through representation and storytelling are really ways of contacting and controlling reality, then controlling reality is also the work of Disney. In combining physical control, stories and representation, Disney creates a comprehensive environment in which they 'share' ideology in order to change or reinforce it. By combining the ideological and the physical, by representing the ideological through a built environment, Disney fuses the savage and the civilized ways in which we attempt to confront and control reality; "what separates the savage from the civilized is that whereas the former tried to master the world by talking to it and imitating it in graphics and dance, the latter moved beyond such pathetic attempts to the invention and employment of extra-somatic means that actually achieved the desired results" (Turner 1980:20-21). This fusion

has proved to be an effective means for Disney to achieve control over their visitors and viewers both physically and ideologically, through the creation of narratives and physical spaces which *become* reality. These constructs are called themed experiences, and are the cornerstone of the Disney World experience. At Disney's Wilderness Lodge, an experienced organized around the theme of national parks, nature and wilderness is offered, as distinct from the 'real' experience of a natural setting. This phenomena of themed experience, and some of the questions it raises, are the topic of the next section.

Chapter IV
It's a Small World: Themes and themed experience

> "At Disneyland...commodity fetishism is reduced to the pith of a haiku.... 'Norway' and 'Japan' are reduced to their minimum negotiable signifiers, Vikings and Samurai, gravlax and sushi." (Michael Sorkin "See You in Disneyland", 1992)

Walt Disney modeled his theme parks on the fairs and theme parks of his day, and they have since become the most pervasive and highly regarded form of the theme park genre. In this chapter I will briefly trace the history of theme parks in order to place Disney's parks in a cultural and historical perspective. I will also discuss some recent critical work on theme parks and their meanings in order to ground my own critique of the themed experiences which Disney World and the Wilderness Lodge provide. I will then discuss the notion of themed experience as a concept, and give examples from my field work of its practice at Disney World. Finally, I would like to make some claims about the cultural and moral value of themed experience. I believe that themed experience, and other highly organized forms of leisure, are homogenizing and limiting experience, particularly experiences of nature. This limitation, even while attributed to a fun and friendly place like Disney World, has far-reaching consequences with regards to the ways in which we think about, and experience, nature.

Concrete Canyons: Pre-Cambrian Mickey

A central feature of Disney's Wilderness Lodge, the nine-story high stone fireplace and chimney in the main lobby folds time and geography in order to provide an educational and entertaining experience to guests at the Lodge. Not content to build an ordinary fireplace, Disney sought to bring 'The West' into the building in a physical sense by modeling the fireplace and its chimney on the layers of geological time found in the Grand Canyon. The Grand Canyon fireplace, with its representation of a specific geographic place and geological formation, evokes both landscape and time on a grand scale. The psychic force of over two billion years of geology and over two hundred years of European-American conquest are commanded by this tower of carefully formed and coloured concrete. It is not to be lost on visitors that this greatness is 'brought to you by Disney', and just to make the formation that much more fun, guests are encouraged to hunt for the Mickey Mouse silhouette subtly carved into one of the geological layers.

Presented not only as an aesthetic and thematic feature of the Lodge, the fireplace and its eighty-two foot chimney are an integral part of the educational objectives of the Lodge. Billed as a "geological tour", guests are able to explore the formation of the stones, guided by educational displays at seven of the chimney's nine levels. Careful attention was paid to the accuracy of the information given in the chimney and the display cases; Disney hired a consultant who wrote and compiled an exhaustive survey of information before construction plans for the structure were drawn up and a final plan was agreed upon and executed. A detailed map of the chimney is provided to guests who request it, and staff at the Lodge are required to know something of its structure and composition as a fossil record. A glass museum-style case is placed next to the chimney at each level accessible to guests, examples of fossils and explanations about the geological formations and time period of the particular level are showcased. In creating such a structure as the fireplace, the Disney Company openly creates a simulacrum, and reveals nature as a theme, rather than a place or concept. Nature, like culture, " is reduced to the pith of a haiku" (Sorkin 1992:216).

World Showcase: Museums, fairs and theme parks

This process of reduction can be traced in part to the historical progression of fairs, festivals and theme parks. According to John Allwood, the theme park is a direct descendent of, historically, medieval traveling fairs and religious festivals, and more recently, the National and International Exhibition movement. Formally organized exhibitions of all kinds flourished in the 19th and 20th centuries as places where culture, science, technological advancements and, most importantly, goods, could be displayed to the public. The history of exhibitions, shows, fairs and the like illustrates "the involvement of the politics of entertainment with the politics of life" (Harris in Altick 1978:3). Tied closely with the sentiment of the times, the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London was "buil(t)...on the combined foundation of the Industrial Revolution, the scope and reserves of the British Empire and the entire intellectual and social outlook of the period" (Allwood 1977:7). Another author takes a broader view of shows and exhibitions, stating that at their early Victorian height "exhibitions were simultaneously giving practical realization to Bacon's advocacy of things over words as instruments of knowledge....reifying the word; through (the shows) the vicarious became the immediate, the theoretical and general became the concrete and specific" (Altick 1978:1). Taking their cue from the innovations of the Industrial Revolution, the public sought new and novel forms of amusement, and exhibitions strove to provide it for them, playing a large role in helping an increasingly urbanizing population escape from "the dullness, the mental vacuity, the constriction of

horizons, the suppression of the imagination which were too often the price of life in the enveloping cities" (Altick 1978:1-2).

Exhibitions were also the birthplace of thematic displays in 1867; "displays with...linked themes gave the viewer more insight into a subject than a collection of miscellaneous items..." (Allwood 1977:8). This use of thematic displays coincided with a shift from privately run exhibitions for profit and entertainment to publicly funded shows which emphasized "'rational amusement' - education sugarcoated with entertainment" (Altick 1978:3). During the Victorian era, public institutions began the slow but steady take over of exhibit-based amusements in an effort to control their educational and moral content. Exhibitions of all kinds eventually gave way to public museums (Altick 1978:4), which emphasis the thematic representation of material for the promotion of understanding. At the same time, commercial interests took over the task of providing 'pure entertainment', and large scale exhibitions which combined educational and entertainment interests were eventually replaced with a mixture of public-run museums and privately owned music halls and similar amusements (Altick 1978:509).

Initially, exhibitions and fairs were one of the first forms of mass advertising; "almost entirely concerned with industrial trade.... (and) the exhibition of manufactured goods..." (Allwood 1977:8). Like its more temporary cousins, Disney World emphasizes the discovery of the world through commerce, and tells its stories by encouraging the purchase of pieces of history; "Disney...is history in the service of the market" (Wilson 1991:161). Eventually, the promotion of understanding through fairs and displays became not so much about understanding in a broad sense, but about the understanding and practice of consumption. At Disney World, the art and science of commodification reach new heights, and virtually everything is up for sale; "(c)ulture becomes a commodity to be bought and sold, happiness is defined as organized recreation and mass consumerism..." (Ames 1992:130). The creation of elaborate themed settings in which to experience the magic of Disney may be done carefully, and with extreme attention to detail, but it is all in the service of allowing the guests to consume more, and hence, spend more. This carefully constructed universe of trade, which gives new meaning to the word 'supermarket', is not only intent on pushing the ideology of consumption on its grounds, but everywhere, and it becomes apparent on close inspection that at the heart of the American values that Disney espouses, the right to freedom, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is to be obtained through purchase. The more you spend, the happier, the more American, you will be. The

more this message is repeated, the more like common sense it seems to become, eventually "to be taken for granted as part of the natural world" (Ames 1992:112).

This connection between the display of material culture and ideology is nothing new; "(t)hrough their cultural work in exhibitions and programs these institutions order history, nature, and societies, thereby helping to structure the way people think about such matters" (Ames 1992:111). Fairs were involved in creating coherent " 'symbolic universes'...structure(s) of legitimation that provide meaning for social experience" (Rydell 1984:2). Rydell writes of American fairs between 1876 and 1916 as "triumphs of hegemony as well as symbolic edifices" (Rydell 1984:2) which organized knowledge and experience and attempted to form consensus about national priorities, values and histories. This consensus, in combination with the utopian atmosphere of the fair, became larger than life: "(t)herein lay the mythopoeic grandeur of the fairs: an ideology of economic development, labeled 'progress', was translated into a utopian statement about the future. An ideology, an idea complex...was presented as the transcendent answer to the problems besetting America" (Rydell 1984:4-5).

Brave New Theme Park

What is new at Disney is the creation of spaces themed to the extent that they are intended to promote ideology through experience, not merely through demonstration or observation. At the root of themed exhibits is a desire to represent objects taken out of their original contexts in a reconstructed context which is able to convey something of the meaning of the object *in situ*. This practice can simply place similar things together, or it can build enveloping settings for objects, or for both objects and viewers. Disney World creates elaborate settings in which guests are exhorted to leave the everyday world behind and experience the magic of Disney through fantasy and the world of the imagination. The motto of the Wilderness Lodge, 'don't just stay, explore!' (Disney's Wilderness Lodge brochure 1994) expresses the idea of experiencing excitement with which Disney attempts to draw you into its reconstructed context. This context is described by Michael Real as "an inclusive environment that involves participants by offering a mixture of media, the development of universally known themes and settings, and an imaginative recounting of familiar immediate human experiences" (Real 1977:47). Disney presents not only a reconstructed environment, but recreated, rather than original, artifacts as well. The resulting artificial environment is used to present themes and organize themed experience, essentially structuring the boundaries of the imaginary world with physical and ideological signposts, and fences.

Within these boundaries, Walt Disney World commodifies and sells experience to its visitors; it is "a cultural business whose goal it is to generate good feeling for a good price" (Van Maanen 1992:5). It is experience itself that is the essential product provided by the Disney Corporation at Disney World, and they have consciously designed the park to be a complete environment in which this experience can take place. Disney facilitates these experiences by creating familiar but make-believe surroundings in which guests can feel comfortable and carefree. In creating these spaces, Disney chooses to present narratives in a thematic way in order to evoke not only the appropriate atmosphere, but the appropriate feelings and ideologies required to make the story as life-like and involving as possible. Disney calls this 'themed experience' and goes to great lengths to represent their chosen themes in extreme, realistic detail; the representation of a theme is enhanced through architecture, costumes, music, food and any other elements which can be realistically incorporated.

In architectural terms, 'theming' is described as "the subordination of a design to a motif, emblem or logo" (The Economist 1994:103). In Disney terms, theming "consists of a shorthand stylization of person, place, and thing to create an archive of collective memory and belief, symbol, and archetype" (King 1991:24). Disney takes theming to another level in their promotion and creation of themed experience, for they use themes as the primary concepts behind both the design of space and the design of the experiences to be had in that space. This is in some ways a seemingly obvious purpose of design, one designs golf courses so that people can play golf on them. Disney has golf courses on its Disney World property, but it is just as likely to build a place where one can experience the Disney-distilled essence of golf without playing the game on a course at all. At Disney World, spaces and settings are constructed around a chosen theme so that, while one knows it is certainly not the real thing, one feels that it is just like the real thing (sometimes better that the real thing), and that the experiences within a given setting are an integral part of that theme. One of my informants at Disney World spoke of the quality of 'seamlessness', referring to the continuity between the chosen narrative themes, the surroundings built to represent or recreate themes, and the experiences that the guests are likely to have there. At Disney World the exploration of the seamlessness of the environment often becomes the most important part of the visit itself; many guests spend their time seeking out the 'realistic' details of a particular themed area, and delight in discovering the 'realness' of it all. The perfection of the imitation titillates and calms us, engendering "reassurance through Imitation" (Eco 1986:75).

What distinguishes themed experience from everyday experience is intentionality and dislocation. Settings for themed experiences can be created virtually anywhere; the themed experience is not constrained by weather, geography, historical or temporal considerations or a multitude of other factors which usually impinge upon everyday reality and experience. Themed experiences are created with the intention of providing a specific experience, choosing carefully and incorporating the elements which are essential to that experience, but not necessarily including the actual experience itself. It is about experiencing something without actually doing it or having the experience of somewhere without physically being there. "The simulation's referent is ever elsewhere; the 'authenticity' of the substitution always depends on the knowledge, however faded, of some absent genuine" (Sorkin 1991:216). The idea is to capture and pin down the essence of an experience and present it within the confines of the space that its creators deem correct, rather than in the place where one might originally experience it. The difference between skiing in the Rockies and skiing in a skiing theme park in downtown Los Angeles (Borgmann 1995) is that the ski facility in the Rockies has been created to let people experience skiing, while the skiing theme park has been created to let people experience the experience of skiing. Disney World creates "ideologically coherent symbolic universes" (Ames 1992:112) in which one can, theoretically, experience the experience of anything at all.

Themed experience occurs in a contextually neutral, artificially created settings, made with the expressed purpose of offering a consciously chosen, well defined set of experiences. The setting is only conducive to the defined set of experiences and is not generally open to alternate uses or experiences; this experience is the thing that is sold. While the setting is to be admired and is integral to the experiencing, it is the 'magic' that happens within the setting that is the real product. The creator of the space and the experience attempts to provide what they consider to be the essence of the experience, how it ought to be, how the people doing the experiencing really want it to be. If Disney could eradicate mosquitoes from their campground they would, in order to provide their guests with a 'better' camping experience. "For millions of visitors, Disney...is just like the real world, only better" (Sorkin 1992:216).

The experiences offered to guests at Disney World are not necessarily concrete things; "pure experience (is) marketed as a culturally-infused 'product' that leaves no physical trace like the...'style' of a restaurant ... or the 'ambiance' of a resort" (Van Maanen 1992:7).

The experiences offered by Disney are evocational rather than lived, they are broad rather than deep. The broad picture which Disney paints as a backdrop for these experiences depends largely on the narration of stories literally and figuratively owned by Disney. These stories are told and retold by the Disney company in different media: television specials, films, books, images on t-shirts, mugs, toys, hats, stickers, the list goes on and on. Each story has its own central theme, and usually several secondary themes, which are told and retold every time the story, or an image of the story, appears. At Disney World, the stories and the themes are worked into rides ('Mr. Toad's Wild Ride'), food (Mickey Mouse shaped ice cream bars) landscape (topiary figures in the shape of Disney characters), and every other possible element. Disney attempts, and to my mind succeeds, to create an all-encompassing thematic environment in which guests exist as thoroughly as possible throughout their visit to Disney World. The extent of the thematic display is so great, both within and without the Disney parks, that whenever an image of a Disney version of a story is shown it represents the entire package of plot, theme and ideology in the eyes of the viewer; "Disney stories...functioned as a kind of utopian fantasy for me....(t)hey were myths that I lived" (Wilson 1991:119).

Disney's use of literature also stems from its World's Fair pedigree; Richard Altick identifies exhibitions and fairs as one of the first places where a newly literate population could experience the reality of the written word. Altick claims that "exhibitions served as a supplement to books, particularly to illustrate in tangible form some of the most popular kinds of informational literature in various periods: narratives of exploration and travel (later including ethnography) treatises on pseudo-science and science (especially natural history), histories (including the stories of momentous recent events), works describing successive centers of archaeological discovery" (Altick 1978:1). Disney uses literature, especially fiction, to tell stories and to connect itself closely with narratives, people, places and time periods which serve its purposes. The rights to A. A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh children's books have been purchased by Disney, allowing Disney to tell the story and shape the story in the imagination. The Disney-version of Winnie the Pooh is in full colour, Winnie is a yellow bear in a bright red t-shirt, Piglet is bright pink, the other characters are similarly rendered, and they are not merely drawn, they move as fully animated cartoon characters. They also have voices, and children brought up with the Disney-version know what they sound like, they sound like the Disney characters. This shaping of a narrative takes it a far cry from words on a page read silently or aloud by a parent, sibling or librarian and the black and white line drawings of the original printings.

Dis(ney)topia

This thematic cocoon replaces reality with archetype; Disney is effectively "referring the visitor from reality to fantasy, from a world of seemingly unambiguous definitions to a sphere in which reality becomes a phantasm and fantasies become real" (Real 1977:55). With this sleight of hand, Disney is able to fashion itself as an utopian representation of the dominant culture, through which, Real hypothesizes, Disney instructs the visiting public on "personal values and ideology" (Real 1977:48) according to Disney. "As a morality play of secular American values, Disneyland utilizes entertainment, education, mythology, and utopianism to typify, strengthen and spread a patriotic American's idealized vision of nation and world, of the past, the present, and the future" (Real 1977:76). This utopian atmosphere adds to the power of Disney's use of thematic experience, with its nod to the potential of how things could be, the artificial becomes an acceptable substitute for the real as long as that artificial something is somehow perceived as better than the real. This perception of 'betterness' is a broad one, and something may seen as better only because of its location within Disney World; I was told several times that an important reason to stay at the Wilderness Lodge rather than go to a real National Park Lodge is that Disney's Wilderness Lodge is only minutes from the Magic Kingdom. The overt assumption here is that the Magic Kingdom is the ultimate vacation destination, and that National Parks, while important, are not the place where you should spend you vacation dollars this year.

Another observer of a Disney universe, in this case Disneyland, calls it a "degenerate utopia" (Marin 1984:239). While an utopia is defined by Louis Marin as an ideological place, "a stage for ideological representation" (Marin 1984: 239), in a 'degenerate utopia' ideology is transformed into myth via a narrative which "resolves formally a fundamental social contradiction" (Marin 1984:239). For Marin, Disneyland is the essential "representation of...contemporary American ideology" (Marin 1984:240) and an example of "how the utopic representation can be entirely caught in a dominant system of ideas and values and, thus, be changed into a myth or a collective fantasy" (Marin 1984:240). Because the Disney utopia is not only viewed but experienced by the visitor these ideas and values, repeated in various narratives, are 'acted out' and participated in. Fictional conflicts are resolved by fictional means, through the visitor's participation they realize and actualize "the ideology of America's dominant groups as the mythic founding narrative for their own society" (Marin 1984:241). The combination of narrative repetition and participation, made possible by themed experience, firmly cements the ideology as natural and self-evident; "the visitor who has left reality outside finds it again, but as a real 'imaginary': a fixed, stereotyped, powerful fantasy" (Marin 1984:245).

In choosing to represent themes, and by dislocating these themes and recreating them from scratch, Disney "provide(s) a bright, attractive conspectus of the nation's memories, stereotypes and fantasies..." (Sorensen 1989:62). Colin Sorensen, in discussing historic theme parks, identifies Disney World as of the "type...(that) does not depend for its location upon historic associations.... (but is) entirely artificial...deriv(ing) much of (its) effectiveness from the freedom with which historical elements from elsewhere can be introduced into the virgin site and deployed or grouped to suit a predetermined theme" (Sorensen 1989:63-64). This artificiality allows for the collapsing of time, space and historical continuity in order to bring about the feeling of familiarity and sameness. Sorensen indicates that, for him, the misuse of time is particularly disturbing, the "denial of the realities of time, this artificial omission of any interval between then and now, leads to the ready assumption, indeed the implication, that then and now are very similar" (Sorensen 1989:65). The denial of time also denies the differences of past generations; essentially, this is the colonization of time, and shares features with the colonization of culture.

The American Experience: 'It's the real thing!'

A stark and technically stunning example of Disney's ability to virtually erase the differences of time, geography and recorded history also demonstrates clearly the supposed similarities between now and then occurs in the American pavilion of the World Showcase at EPCOT Center. The main event of the American Pavilion is the AudioAnimatronic presentation, The American Experience (co-sponsored by the Coca Cola Company and American Express). This presentation is a spectacular concoction which combines recorded sound, still photography, film, and moving, speaking life size action figures. The technological prowess on display here is incredibly impressive, and is in part what allows Disney to get away with the cloying and jingoistic content of the show; regardless of the message, (which even American reviewers find hard to swallow) its wizardry puts it consistently on the 'not-to-be-missed' list of Disney attractions. Disney spurns the idea of real actors for this extravaganza, and using a technology they call Animatronics create life-like robotic figures who narrate and illustrate the Disney-version of the story of America. The realism of all of the figures is extreme, and Disney pulls out all of the stops in order to make this a bigger, better-than-the-real-thing tour de force. The only thing that keeps this from being a completely hyperreal experience is that the action takes place on a stage, with some of the theatrical conventions that entails. Even this relationship is breached slightly by Disney, at the end of the story of America the audience is asked by the Animatronic

figures to sing the American national anthem. What is amazing is that many of them do, breaking down the conventional 'fourth wall' barrier of the stage and enthusiastically joining in song with what are essentially robots.

It is highly ironic that The American Experience is sponsored by none other than Coca Cola, whose famous slogan "Its the real thing!" seems somewhat out of place here. The other sponsor for the event is American Express, embodying the spirit of 'buy today, pay later' which has fueled the North American economy since the end of the Second World War. That these two companies would choose to ally themselves with such a hyper-patriotic, technological spectacle of American accomplishment is part and parcel of the American Dream in which they all participate and serves to reinforce the idea that history, time and space all come together for each other's benefit under the aegis of the marketplace and in the name of commerce. Buy the American Dream at Disney World, all major credit cards accepted.

The American Experience is fascinating because of its simultaneous disregard for and use of time and space in presenting and holding together a vaguely historical narrative structure. The show is narrated by two 'Animatrons', Mark Twain and Benjamin Franklin, who guide the viewer through a brief, chronological, history of the United States of America. While Franklin and Twain were not contemporaries in any actual, historical sense, they are presented together on stage, 'speaking' and 'interacting' with one another; the only thing that indicates they are from different historical time periods are their costumes. For those not familiar with these two men, one might assume their interactive relationship on stage to be just as 'real' as the rest of the story. In representing the characters this way, Disney ignores conventional conceptions of time within the context of a tale told in historical, chronological order. The figures, then, serve to reinforce one of the major themes of the story being told, namely the more things change the more they stay the same, and that the values which guided America two hundred years ago are still guiding America today. This message of similarity between the past and the present is surely that of Sorensen's concern.

Another theme presented in The American Experience is the importance of the land in shaping the American story. The treatment of land and nature is consistent with the way in which land and nature are portrayed elsewhere by the Disney Company (a more detailed discussion of this appears elsewhere in this work). Two things are striking in this presentation, the large jumps in geography and the inclusion of an overt reference to an ethic of conservation. First, the show jumps from landscape to landscape, emphasizing

along the way the boundlessness of the frontier and the strength of the American spirit in the face of natural adversity. No matter what the climate or geography, the American people will conquer and reign supreme over the land and the elements; this is a large part of what makes the American people what they are, and therefore the American nation the great and mighty country that it is. Like time itself, the differences between geographies, land and weather are signified as being similar in that they all pose problems to be studied, solved and eventually eradicated. The differences that remain on the landscape are seen in terms of their use value or as aesthetic considerations. Second, John Muir is presented Animatronically as America's first preservationist. In discussion with President Theodore Roosevelt, Muir explains the importance of setting aside certain pieces of land in order to remind Americans what they were up against in their struggle against the wilderness. Muir also indicates that there is merit in preserving pristine wilderness for its own sake, President Roosevelt is in agreement and the first American National Parks are created. This vignette serves to give Disney that environmentally friendly glow, and reinforces the idea that nature, particularly wilderness, is separate from culture, and is defined by human boundaries. It also intimates an underlying Disney theme regarding nature and wilderness, that they exist in the past.

Colonizing common sense

The colonization of time and geography is also evident at Disney World with regards to Disney's representations of nature on a more general level. Nature, particularly wild nature or wilderness, is placed firmly in the past. The images of nature which appear in the parts of Disney World themed in the future are highly controlled, conquered landscapes which are appropriately harnessed to provide for human needs. An example of this is the Horizons exhibit at EPCOT Center, which showcases human attempts at agricultural stability, and concludes with a trip through farms of the future (co-sponsored by NASA). This method of food production is regulated and controlled by computer, and in some cases is so far removed from the land that it does not involve soil or natural light. One is ferried through an agricultural scene which is controlled by technology, from the boats which carry visitors to the ways in which the plants are grown and watered.

According to Alexander Wilson, this highly technological orientation towards nature, landscape and agriculture is consistent with recent trends in representing these themes at World's Fairs, which "have all but obscured the land itself through their focus on technology" (Wilson 1991:157). Wilson argues that fairs, exhibitions and theme parks have a very particular relationship with land and landscape, and that this relationship has

been eroded by the new emphasis on technology. The American World's Fairs in particular displayed an utopian view of not only society, but of land use and landscape, "(i)nscribed in their very grounds is a popular history of the organization of landscape...and of the tensions between real and ideal space in the North American imagination" (Wilson 1991:157).

In its attempts to create space which is neutral in order to inscribe it with new meaning, Disney World represents "some new post-industrial, post-urban space" (Wilson 1991:178), presented as 'scapes': landscapes, cityscapes, countryscapes. These 'imagineered' spaces serve to bring nature under Disney's strict control, effectively "annexing nature...transforming nature into entertainment and inserting it into the over-all modern project of development" (Wilson 1991:181). In Wilson's eyes "what we see in Disney World is the recent history of capital relations inscribed on the land" (Wilson 1991:183) in very real ways. The cultural work of this inscription is that of control, and the creation of a place and climate where the benefits of control and consumption can be seen in all their splendor as part of the natural order of things. Even space which is uncontrollable is brought under Disney's aegis, 'wilderness' becomes the name of an RV campground and a luxury resort hotel. In submitting wilderness to Disneyfication in this way its meaning, and therefore its value, are transformed by this new signification. Repeating and reinforcing this new meaning simply serves to make it part of the common language and belief; "popular forms colonize our common sense" (Ames 1992:137) and make the signified and the signifier real.

One of the ideas that Disney repeats and reinforces is that untamed nature belongs in the past, therefore the Wilderness Lodge is made to appear to exist in the past thematically by creating an entirely fictional 'history' for the Lodge. As a northwestern structure in a northwestern setting built in central Florida, the Lodge not only denies and defies geography and landscape, but also neatly circumvents time by its representation as something from the past. Following Sorensen, the Wilderness Lodge is just one of a series of recent reconstructions of the past meant to address "an urgent wish to achieve an immediate confrontation with a moment in time, a re-entry into a vanished circumstance when, for a brief moment, the in-the-round 'real' physical, audible and (especially popular) smellable realities of a distant 'then' become a present and convincing 'now'" (Sorensen 1989:61). The history represented is imaginary, history 'illusioneered' as part of a larger narrative.

Nature, brought to you by Disney

"Nature is relentlessly evoked at Disney World, yet it is always a nature that has been worked and transformed; subsumed by the doctrine of progress" (Wilson 1991:180). This subsumed nature is a prominent theme at Disney World, as is wilderness which is under the exploration and domination of white Americans. Within the context of theming and themed experience, nature becomes a meta-theme which in turn reveal sub-themes about things related to nature, in particular how commonly held ideas about nature and wilderness shape what it is to be American.

As outlined by Wilson, Disney has long been creating images of nature, first through their popularization of "the genre of the wildlife movie in the early 1950's" (Wilson 1991:118). Disney is participating in "a long tradition of investing the natural world with meaning" (Wilson 1991:129) in its making of these films; this meaning is an important part of both the story that Disney tells about itself and the stories that Disney tells. Because nature is a theme, it is presented by Disney as a narrative in films, television specials and printed material. The pervasiveness of this narrative has had far-reaching consequences according to Wilson; North American's "ways of thinking about and altering our landscapes these last forty years or so have been shaped and framed by the narrative (of Disney)..." (Wilson 1991:118).

The 'Disney version' of nature as narrative led to the serialization of natural processes and the development of highly sophisticated ways of filming, editing and scripting natural events. In order for the representations offered by Disney to work, two things were necessary. First, the separation between humans and nature had to be maintained, this was already present within the culture, and was becoming more so in conjunction with the second necessarily element: physical removal of people from nature. "Disney's early work (in representing nature) had coincided with a momentous change in human demography...(n)ature was newly out of reach for most North Americans" (Wilson 1991:131), who were quickly entering either urban environments or the highly controlled park-like settings of the suburbs.

Wilson feels that Disney's nature movies served as a mild antidote for heavy urban and suburbanization, they "functioned as a bucolic idyll for a popular culture saturated with images of technology and the domination of nature" (Wilson 1991:131). Disney, however, simply replaced one form of domination with another, instead of overt physical domination, Disney employed narrative, and consequently ideological, dominion over

nature through its representation on a thematic scale. In viewing nature as a meta-theme through which one could present values that Disney held in high regard, the natural world is reduced to a vehicle from which to wave the Disney banner and sell Disney merchandise. The stories told in Disney's nature films were "transparent allegories of progress, paeans to the official cult of exploration, industrial development and an ever-rising standard of living" (Wilson 1991:118). These stories were part of Disney's over-arching project to present "shorthand stylizations of person, place, and thing to create an archive of collective memory and belief, symbol, and archetype" (King 1991:24), the essence of themed ideology and experience. In doing so, Disney presented "stories and memories of the non-human world (which) were meant to stand in for the stories and memories of our human world and vice versa" (Wilson 1991:118). This blurred the lines between the narratives of human and non-human making the meaning understandable, while still holding the realm of nature and the realm of humans in opposition. Understanding nature through narratives which mirror human stories, the beaver family is much like our own nuclear family structure, itself an institution under scrutiny, privileges the values behind the narratives which Disney chooses to use with reference to nature. Through Disney's immense saturation of the media, these values become seen as universal and virtually unassailable. While this may sometimes be beneficial to both humans and the environment (Disney was involved to a certain extent in the movement to ban DDT) it can also be used in less beneficial ways, for example to justify and "legitimize...metaphors about economic growth" (Wilson 1991:118) which are uncritical of the long-term effects of this growth, in particular the impossibility of our ability or need to sustain it.

Disney's Wilderness Lodge is also a part of the nature-as-meta-theme project of the Walt Disney Company, and it reflects the values of progress, exploration, control and individualism evident in other Disney representations of nature and wilderness. As with most Disney themes, the theme of the Wilderness Lodge is difficult to distill, for it incorporates many ideas and concepts. The Lodge is built to represent a National Park lodge from the turn of the century and, as touched on before, in this way it attempts to straddle 150 or so years of American history. The Lodge also attempts to straddle geography and landscape; the Lodge and its landscape are built to represent the Northwestern United States, yet this representation of landscape is strictly thematic in itself. An exact location (state, region, county or otherwise) in the Northwest is never specified and elements which would fit comfortably in Montana are mixed with those which would only be found in the state of Washington; the Northwest, therefore, becomes a theme unto itself.

What is created by this layering of theme upon theme is a simulacra, or a simulation which has no true original. With out reference to a specific original, distinguishing characteristics can be cobbled together to suit the needs of the creators, rather than remain true to something which can be identified and used for meaningful comparison. Going through the Lodge, one can pick out elements from other, 'real', places, the light fixtures closely resemble those at Jasper Park Lodge for example, but nothing is exact, it is bricolage at its most exact (irony intended). This imitation intrigues and enchants, but it does not have much substance. Eventually the discontinuous elements begin to intrude, and the hot, humid air beyond the sliding glass doors contrasts too sharply with the coolness within and Florida is recalled.

Chapter V
The forest for the trees: Nature and reality

> "The detail is extraordinary. 'You may be proud of yourself for noticing something', says a Disney spokesman, 'but somebody thought to put it there.' And people *do* notice things, from the fake underbricks of Italy and the fake barnacles on the Japanese *torii* to the horticultural efforts....All these detailed differences make it difficult to see the forest for the trees" (Fjellman 1992:251).

Recent technological developments have added further dimensions to what is thought of as real, and the development and use of such concepts as virtual reality, artificial reality, cyberspace and hyperreality are forcing the boundaries of a reality which at one time seemed easily contained, described and experienced by conventional theoretical and practical means. The simulacrum created by Disney for the provision of themed experiences challenge commonly held definitions of reality. As physical constructions they seem to be real, but the experiences they provide are not real; while you appear to fly over London with Peter Pan it is a simulated flight. The effects of Disney's simulations on the conception and value of reality are the topic of this chapter, particularly as they influence perceptions of nature.

The real and the natural

Why these 'new' types of reality cannot be described within existing theoretical frameworks is a contentious issue. Albert Borgmann thinks that our difficulty in including different constructions of reality into conventional ways of thinking about reality is that these new constructions are closely connected to material culture, namely new information technologies. Borgmann traces the history of our thinking about material culture from ancient times, suggesting that the ancients passed down to us the virtually unassailable idea that material things are, simply, real; "so solid and familiar that (their) direct bearing on philosophy could be handled in parentheses and asides" (Borgmann 1992:292). This position makes it difficult to ascribe moral or ethical significance to material objects, they essentially become neutral, or morally inert, within this theoretical framework. This moral inertness denied the sacredness of material things, and along with the severing of the relationship between nature and philosophy, was a strong factor in helping to pave the way for technological innovation and expansion on a grand scale in Europe and, subsequently, North America. Difficulty in ascribing moral value to material things now manifests itself

in an inability to ascribe moral value to the 'realities' that material things create, for example hyperreality.

In North America, ideas of nature and wilderness have been instrumental in the formation of national and regional identities in both the United States and Canada. In the United States, the idea of the frontier has long provided Americans with a strong sense of themselves in relation to land, and this has in turn shaped American society and culture. Rather than gaining an understanding of the New World from its indigenous inhabitants, early settlers brought with them an understanding of nature which saw North America as a wilderness "simply and entirely" (Borgmann 1984:183) which must be brought under human control. Originally, this project was fueled by the need for the things necessary for basic survival, but with the expansion of the industrial revolution nature began to be seem, used as, an endless supply of raw materials with which to fuel the factories and the cities which grew up around them. There was a prevailing "tendency to look at nature merely as raw material that was to be used and abandoned" (Borgmann 1984:184). With the realization that the resources would not last indefinitely, attempts at conservation began, and certain pieces of nature were set aside and designated as wilderness.

This view of nature had to do with a sense of reality as a whole; "(d)riving nature to submission was finally not the work of individual adventurous pioneers but the extension and application of an approach to reality..." (Borgmann 1984:184). This approach to reality was "based on science, developed by engineers, and primarily practiced in factories" (Borgmann 1984:184) and is still very evident in North American society today. It is, however, transforming in the face of new technology and the creeping realization that the natural, physical frontier is all but lost, literally and figuratively devoured by the very forces which created it. With this transformation has come the questioning of reality, and the reality of what we know as nature is also under scrutiny.

Nature, to a large degree, has become something outside of the domain of the immediately human. Borgmann traces this to ancient Greece, where the unity of nature, reality and the divine was severed. This distinction took place because of Thales' "curiosity about the composition of reality" (Borgmann 1995:32), this curiosity and subsequent investigation of what reality really is led to its abstraction and therefore its separation from nature and divinity. In place of this unity, nature became "a nonhuman region *of and within* reality, divinity one *above and beyond* reality" (Borgmann 1995:32). Slowly but surely reason became the way to access reality and to explain nature, and the philosophical and scientific

march towards the control of reality and the domination of nature was begun (Borgmann 1995:33-34). The modern project, which was characterized by the three tenets of realism, individualism and universalism (Borgmann 1992:48), ultimately expressed itself "as the fusion of the domination of nature with the primacy of method and the sovereignty of the individual" (Borgmann 1992:25). If this project "was to succeed, it had to culminate in a pervasive artificiality and the end of nature" (Borgmann 1995:33). For Borgmann the very ideas of the 'natural' and the 'artificial' are irredeemably modernist (Borgmann 1995:38-39), and as we move more firmly into the postmodern they must again shift and transform in order to account for new ways of thinking and being.

Within modernism the natural and the artificial have given each other meaning by being clearly delineated opposites. This delineation is fast breaking down, as artificiality quickly overtakes reality and nature is recreated at will. As stated by Eric Higgs: "(n)ature in the late 20th century is like an archipelago about to be covered by the inexorable rise of a sea of artificiality" (Higgs 1992:97). Both Higgs and Borgmann are concerned with the differences between the real and the artificial with respect to nature, and both tie this concern to what Higgs' calls "moral valuation" (Higgs 1992:100). For Borgmann, the difference between the natural and artificial are clear. The natural "possesses a commanding presence and a telling continuity with the surrounding world" (Borgmann 1995:38), while the artificial "provides a disposable experience that is discontinuous with its environment" (Borgmann 1995:38). The real promotes engagement, while the artificial promotes consumption. As consumption becomes more and more the primary way in which we engage the world, "(t)he security of our ability to distinguish between the artificial and the real is being challenged...as the former overtakes the latter" (Higgs 1992:100).

Things and devices

While the idea of the neutrality of things is common, Borgmann argues that it is certainly not all-encompassing, nor does it prevent people from ascribing values to things and to reality. For Borgmann, there are "two kinds of things and reality(:) commanding and disposable" (Borgmann 1992:294), and these two types of things and realities are valued in different ways. In terms of material culture, these two categories can be distinguished with reference to reality as things and devices; "(t)hings constitute commanding reality, devices procure disposable reality" (Borgmann 1992:296). In some of Borgmann's earlier work, he describes things as inseparable from their contexts and from their engagement with the world, while devices are valued only for the commodity they provide. In order to make the

difference between things and devices clear, Borgmann uses wood stoves and central heating as examples, arguing that while the woodstove offered the home and family a central focus for work and living, and heat as a result of their labour and involvement, a centralized heating plant provides heat without personal, daily engagement. It is no coincidence that Disney makes a wood-burning fireplace a central feature of the lobby at the Wilderness Lodge; the prominent placement of the fireplace attempts to capture the good feelings and sensations associated with a thing which commands reality (Borgmann 1984:41-42). The fireplace at Disney's Wilderness Lodge is, by Borgmann's standards, a device, for it aids in the provision of experience as a commodity and contributes to the creation of a disposable reality.

By distinguishing things and devices with reference to reality this way, Borgmann opens up a space for the moral evaluation of material culture, and an examination of reality which is able to incorporate conceptions of reality that are closely tied to the use of new technologies and human created environments. For Borgmann, the evaluation of material culture is crucial in order to question "the assumption that the eclipse of commanding reality and the prominence of disposable reality (i)s the normal arena of human conduct" (Borgmann 1992:294), for it is through the conduit of material culture that disposable reality is created and sustained. As with Disney's fireplace, much of the material culture which currently surrounds us is not as neutral as it may appear, calling into question its purpose and, indeed, its moral and social value. "Assessing the moral significance of the material culture, then, comes in large part to asking what the moral consequences of the rule of the device paradigm are" (Borgmann 1992:297).

The 'hyperreal island'

While he distinguishes between the natural and the artificial, Borgmann sees the differences between the real and the hyperreal of more immediate importance; "the critical and crucial distinction for nature and humans is not between the natural and the artificial but the real and hyperreal" (Borgmann 1995:39). In moving from the natural to the real, Borgmann includes the natural *in* the real, rather than framing it as a category *of* the real. In using the idea of hyperreality, he acknowledges the existence of virtual realities created and/or enhanced by human involvement, and identifies them as a category of the real, rather than as a category beyond the real.

Borgmann states that hyperreality has three main characteristics. First, it is brilliant, which means that it includes and highlights the desirable and excludes the unwanted. Second, it is

rich, it is more than the real, better than the real, more complete than the real. Third, it is pliable, meaning that it is "entirely subject to...desire and manipulation" (Borgmann 1992:87-88). All of these characteristics add up to glamour and the creation of the perfect commodity. Borgmann identifies Disney World as a "fully integrated hyperreal island of considerable size" (Borgmann 1992:93), meeting all three characteristics of the hyperreal. Disney World is brilliant, rich and certainly pliable, glamour is evident at every turn and it comes close to perfecting the commodification of experience, surely one of the most elusive yet highly marketable products of late. What happens when the experience that is offered is one of nature and wilderness, yet in an entirely human-created setting? What does the acceptance of this say about our ideas about nature? What moral valuation can we make of such a place?

What troubles Borgmann about hyperreality is its moral inertness (Borgmann 1992:94-95); when we look at hyperreality from a moral standpoint, the boundaries between the real and the unreal begin to blur. To deal with this problem, Borgmann indicates that "what needs moral consideration (with regards to hyperreality)...is not so much the producing as the product" (Borgmann 1992:110). Pointing to the differences between the real and the hyperreal, Borgmann characterizes hyperreality as ultimately only a commodity, and "(c)ommodities, glamorous ones especially, are alluring, but they are not sustaining" (Borgmann 192:96). In Borgmann's view, hyperreality's inability to sustain people is what robs it of its significance and force (Borgmann 1992:95-96).

Another author enthralled and intrigued by the hyperreal is Umberto Eco, an Italian scholar, journalist and fiction writer. Eco views hyperreality as the ultimate (and logical) culmination of an American culture more titillated by the sign of the real than by the real itself; "(t)he ideology of this America wants to establish reassurance through imitation" (Eco 1990:57). In America, things aren't just real, they are 'the real thing' (Coca Cola) or they are 'more' than real, their reality is dependent not upon their actual authenticity, but on their claims to being real, and their representation of themselves as real; "(a)bsolute unreality is offered as real presence" (Eco 1990:7). The unreal things which are offered are commodities, because commodification is at the centre of the meanings given to objects.

As Eco travels through this "America of furious hyperreality" (Eco 1990:7), he tracks the interdependency of the fake and the real, the inauthentic and the authentic as expressed through signs. Signs, rather than signaling a thing, imitate it more fully; "(t)he sign aims to be the thing, to abolish the distinction of the reference, the mechanism of

replacement....(n)ot the image of the thing, but its....double" (Eco 1990:7). This has two consequences. First, the signs must be seen as virtually real, which means that "the 'completely real' becomes identified with the 'completely fake'" (Eco 1990:7) in a very direct way. Second, the importance of authenticity wanes, becoming virtually meaningless, only the information or the message of the sign has any significance, and this significance can be expressed equally well by either the sign or 'the real thing'. "What counts...is not the authenticity of a piece, but the amazing information it conveys" (Eco 1990:15). This does not completely discount the real, and it still has an important function in making the imitation work; "for the reproduction to be desired, the original has to be idolized...which reminds you of the greatness...of the past" (Eco 1990:19). However, Eco emphasizes that it is the idolization of the original, rather than the original itself, which carries out this function. In idolizing, the original becomes less important than the act of idolization itself, and once the cult of the idolization is established, it is no longer the original which is revered, but a simulacra.

Wilderness Lodge: mythical super-lodge

A reverence for simulacra is evident at Disney's Wilderness Lodge, for example in the way in which the Lodge attempts to present itself as a composite of the lodges of the United States National Parks. National Parks have long been held in high regard in the United States as living symbols of America's greatness. Original designs for the Lodge included a heavy emphasis on the legend of Teddy Roosevelt and 'his' parks, and while Teddy is gone from the Lodge in name, his spirit lives on the Lodge, most tangibly in two carved bears which hold up each side of the bar. To design and build the Lodge the design team took a six week field trip to National Park Lodges in Yellowstone, Yosemite, Jackson Hole and Glacier National Parks. The purpose of this trip was not only to pick up elements of design, but to capture the feeling and essence of the parks and their lodges, "how nature feels" said one informant, and to transport this more ephemeral aspect of the parks back to Disney property in central Florida.

The task of getting the "correct vernacular" (informant 1994) for the Lodge with reference to National Park Lodges is accomplished in countless ways, some of which are transplanted directly from existing National Park properties. The patterns inlaid into the floor were inspired by those at the Ahwahnee Lodge (Yosemite), the exterior stone and log construction is taken from the Jackson Lodge and the Old Faithful Inn. The iron light fixtures also come from Yellowstone, yet they also are similar to those at the Jasper Park Lodge in the Canadian Rockies, which was not part of the team's field trip. The walkway

and outlook in the courtyard of the Wilderness Lodge which overlook the pool and geyser are "exactly like they build them in Yellowstone National Park" (informant 1994), except that the Disney-versions are made of concrete formed, coloured and painted to look like stone, while those at Yellowstone are made of stone found in the park.

It is not simply the composite nature of the gathering of styles which makes Disney's Wilderness Lodge a simulacra, it is the fact that the Lodge reproduces and represents something which does not exist, a mythical super-lodge. Like many things created by Disney, it is truly a copy without an original. At its heart the Wilderness Lodge represents not only artifacts and a stylistic genre, it attempts to be a better-than-real Park Lodge, a lodge which fits Borgmann's definition of the hyperreal. Disney's Wilderness Lodge is brilliant, highlighting the desirable elements of National Park Lodges, such as their 'natural' settings and their use of natural elements like wood and stone in their architecture. The Lodge excludes the unwanted, there are no unpredictable wild animals and the road to the Lodge never needs to be plowed. Keeping out undesirable elements takes on a different meaning at Disney World, the designers of the Lodge wanted to include deadfall in the construction of the stream and geyser formation, but it just wasn't possible at Disney; "the Disney janitocracy would be out there cleaning it up, we even looked at fiberglass deadfall, but it was way too expensive" (informant 1994). Also in accordance with Borgmann's definition, the Lodge is rich, or better than real. The geyser goes off predictably every hour, no waiting, the guests can see native art without having to deal with native people, the geyser and the Grand Canyon are within easy walking distance of each other. Finally, the Lodge is pliable; as an entirely created physical and cultural space the Lodge is quite obviously subject to the "desire and manipulation" (Borgmann 1992:88) of its creators. Ultimately, the Lodge is a commodity, and because of this Borgmann would most likely find this place "alluring...but not sustaining" (Borgmann 1992:96).

Another theorist who writes of simulacra, hyperreality and the significance of signs is Jean Baudrillard. Rather than debating the relative reality of things, however, Baudrillard rejects reality in favour of the sign; Robert Hughes claims that Baudrillard believes that "(t)here *is* no real world....we are enclosed in a world of signs" (Hughes 1989:378). Within this enclosure, communication is entirely self-referential, the signs refer only to each other, rather than to reality. This creates simulacra, rather than reality; this "replacement of real things and actual relationships by their simulacra is what Baudrillard calls 'hyperrealization' " (Hughes 1989: 379). Hughes is highly critical of Baudrillard's replacement of reality with illusion, for "it denies the possibility of experiencing anything *except* illusion"

(Hughes 1989:379). In this denial it negates individual choice and assumes mass passivity on the part of the public, effectively turning the public into cultural dupes who cannot, and do not care to, tell the difference between reality and fantasy. While the public may wish to maintain their ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy in every day life (and this is itself debatable), they come to Disney World with the intent of living out fantasy and experiencing illusion. To their credit, the Disney people never deny that they are in the business of selling dreams, and the creation of simulacra is undertaken to provide guests a place in which to live out these dreams.

Louis Marin looks at Disney's representation of reality in terms of what he calls a "degenerate utopia (which) is ideology changed into the form of a myth" (Marin 1984:239). Marin sees ideology as "the representation of the imaginary relationship individuals maintain with their real conditions of existence" (Marin 1984:239); when this ideology is placed in an utopian setting and presented in a narrative format it is given mythical status, and becomes understood as something natural and common-sensical. In order to accomplish this, Disney replaces the 'real' world with an imaginary one. Guests to Disney's properties are complicit in this, a journey through the imaginary is what they expect and pay for, this makes for an agreement between Disney and their guests that, while guests of Disney, a willing suspension of disbelief is undertaken. This suspension of disbelief is taken very seriously by visitors to Disney World, and it is not uncommon to observe people who would ordinarily be unwilling to participate in make-believe play along with such things as people dressed up as larger than life size Dwarfs, going so far as to ask for Dopey's autograph, delighted when they receive it.

One of the mechanisms used by Disney to create this atmosphere of fantasy is the neutralization of the world outside the park gates. For Marin and authors like Michael Real and Stephen Fjellman, the action of travel is the first step in which this is achieved; no one lives within walking distance of Disney World, therefore traveling and a trip, usually a holiday, are part of the experience, effectively removing the visitor from the realm of their usual, everyday personal and regional geography. Once in the Disney World vicinity, the visitor must travel off the state highway and on to the Disney highway. Depositing their cars in a parking lot (itself a surrender of personhood remarked upon by Marin and other theorists) identified by the name of a Disney character, the visitor takes their first form of Disney transport to the ticket booth. This is where the lines start, and for much of the rest of the day Disney's guests will spend a fair bit of time waiting in line. Marin calls this progression from road to parking lot to ticket line-up a "neutral gap" between the reality of

the outside world and the utopia of Disney World. This gap, rather than creating a sense of place, or somewhere, instead serves to create a nowhere in which the "outer world is completely neutralized" (Marin 1984:244). This neutralization helps visitors leave the real world behind and prepares them to enter the exciting, magical world of Disney free from their everyday cares, worries and real lives.

Once ushered into this new reality, visitors are bombarded with information which will make it coherent and acceptable. Disney has actually already started this process in the outside world through their massive distribution of films, other media products and merchandise, which tell the stories that are retold at Disney World, and stimulate the desire to 'live' these stories by experiencing them at Disney World. Once within that world, however, it is these stories which become the way reality is experienced, their narrative structures are repeated and participated in by guests, in this way "reality is changed into image" (Marin 1984:245), images are given equal values and by this sleight of hand fantasy and reality become interchangeable. "This coming back of reality as fantasy, as a hallucinatory wish fulfillment, is in fact mediated by a complete system of representations designed by...Disney and constituting a rhetorical and iconic code and vocabulary that have been perfectly mastered by the narrator-visitor" (Marin 1984:246). The mastery of the code is crucial for the experience to work, for the world of Disney to turn the imaginary into reality.

Not only is Disney World creating a new reality, it is saying something about the very nature of reality. Through the use of hyperreality, reality is seemingly flexible, easily constructed by those with the right kind of imagination and the right amount of money. Disney's 'hyperreal island' expands beyond the park, backing up their version of hyperreality with a context created through various media and shown almost around the globe; Disney is able to present their version of things and call it reality, blurring the lines between the real and hyperreal. The inevitable conclusion here is that Disney has created a referent for their simulacra through the repeated telling in as many different ways as possible of the Disney version, thereby creating reality out of myth. At what point does the hyperreal begin to become the real, where does the commodity become a thing, rather than a device, and begin to have a certain kind of telling continuity? Disney does their best to create this continuity, to make their products appear to take on the importance of things.

Does Disney do this deliberately to undermine the value of reality, or are they responding to an existing erosion of reality's value? They would probably argue that they are providing a

place for people to live out their fantasies, sidestepping the fact that the fantasies Disney caters to are those that they themselves have created. Disney has perceived the richness of the hyperreal when compared to the real and found it very profitable indeed. Whether they are marketing Disney character hallowe'en costumes or wilderness, the reality is, hyperreality sells. Given the attraction of hyperreality, and its apparent success for the Disney Company, this question becomes virtually meaningless, for Disney's mass marketing of the hyperreal will surely continue to undermine the value of reality, whether or not other forces also contribute to its devaluation. While people will certainly continue to attend 'real' parks and wilderness areas, Disney's Wilderness Lodge will stand as a testament to the 'imagineering' potential of the hyperreal to transform continuous reality into themed experience. The themed experience of nature will certainly have an influence on perceptions of the reality of nature and wilderness, particularly as things which make America, and Americans, unique.

Chapter VI
Journey's End: Conclusions

> "As Sartre might have put it, the world of Disney is a manifest case of bad faith" (Kieran 1992: 31).

I return to my original guiding questions for this project as a way of summarizing some of the issues discussed in the main part of the paper, and then attempt to answer these questions briefly. They are:

1. what does Disney's Wilderness Lodge offer that a trip to a 'real' wilderness area cannot?
2. what are the underlying themes and concepts about nature that are part of the Lodge? how are they commodified and sold to guests?
3. how does the Lodge play on visitor's perceptions about reality, nature and experience in order to communicate these themes?

From an anthropological standpoint, Disney's Wilderness Lodge is a complex and fascinating example of self-conscious cultural expression. The intent of this project was to investigate this expression by looking closely at the North American concepts of nature and wilderness presented at Disney's Wilderness Lodge, and to map their significance in a larger cultural and social context. I observed Disney's Wilderness Lodge in detail, and used these observations to illustrate the representations of nature which Disney undertakes at the Lodge, in other parts of Disney World, and in other forms of Disney representation. I considered nature and wilderness as concepts that are culturally constructed, and showed that Disney uses them at a conceptual level to create and reinforce ideologies; culture and ideology, always closely intertwined, are forced apart and grafted together again in ways which serve the aims of Disney.

Disney's Wilderness Lodge is essentially an hotel which offers guests a wilderness experience without the wilderness. The underlying themes and concepts of the Lodge are represented in this human-constructed 'natural' setting which presents nature thematically through the representation of certain cultural expressions of human relationships with nature and wilderness. This thematic representation makes concepts like nature, wilderness and the frontier themes of a larger narrative about the formation of an American identity from thoughts about, expressions of and behaviours towards the North American

landscape, specifically the landscape of the West. This view of wild nature as a uniquely American phenomena is guided by Disney's representation of American national parks at the Wilderness Lodge, which is modeled as a tribute to the lodges of national parks. The image of national parks is used to highlight the role that they played historically, and continue to play, in creating and sustaining an American identity and highlighting its uniqueness on an international level. Disney is appropriating and re-creating American myths about nature, wilderness and the frontier in their own image, self-consciously blurring the lines between truth and fiction in order to allow their guests to 'live the dream' of the American West.

What Disney attempts with the Wilderness Lodge is nothing short of a re-colonization of nature as a conceptual product. Disney commodifies and markets the *concepts* of nature and wilderness, and creates 'natural' spaces in which to experience these concepts. In this way Disney controls our experience of nature while we are in their domain, and colours our experiences of nature without. While the advent and progress of the tourism industry began this work in the management of space for the its own purposes, Disney takes this project to new levels in its actual creation of new space and new landscapes, rather than management of existing land. Disney takes a geographically and ecologically foreign ecosystem and its cultural signifiers and transplants them to central Florida, creating a simulacrum of wilderness experience that gives them unparalleled control over both ecosystem and experience. Disney's reduction of things to archetypes implies that a little verisimilitude goes a long way, even so far as to stand in for the real thing and offer an adequate representation and/or experience.

In order to control visitor experience Disney creates a simulacrum incorporating themes congruent with the ideal and the reality of national parks and provides guests with a themed experience within that construction. Themed experience relies on the creation of realistic physical and narrative contexts like the Wilderness Lodge in which people are able to experience things similar to what they might encounter in the 'real' place; it is within the context of themed experience that Disney plays on visitor's perceptions of reality, nature and experience in order to communicate themes and concepts. Not only does Disney create this physical and conceptual simulacrum, it has generated its own referents for its creation by continually representing nature and wilderness in the popular media, especially television, over a forty year period. The viewers of Disney's nature specials on television are also those people who will visit the Wilderness Lodge and the messages of the Lodge make sense, they seem real, in light of the context which the visitor has received of

Disney's version of nature. With this context intact, and the representations of nature and wilderness at the Wilderness Lodge, Disney is able to impart its ideological message to the viewer as seemingly part of the natural order of things.

Tall Tales on Tall Totems

I have suggested, in agreement with Borgmann and Higgs, that the creation of such places and the selling of the experiences designed for them is problematic, for it replaces actual experience with virtual experience and creates an hyperreality (Borgmann 1992). With reference to my guiding questions, this hyperreal experience of nature is what the Wilderness Lodge provides that a trip to a 'real' wilderness area does not. Hyperreality and other artificial forms of experience are fast overtaking reality, replacing more immediate experience and perhaps, the immediate experience of reality itself. From an environmental standpoint, this replacement places people at a greater distance from a nature which requires their intimate involvement for its survival; Disney's Wilderness Lodge is another high-tech component of that distancing. By making nature a theme (Nature, The Great Outdoors) which can be experienced outside of a setting which most people would call 'natural', Disney's Wilderness Lodge becomes an example of the widespread character of artificiality in North American culture, and highlights the extent to which the world is constructed by humans for human interests. This highly constructed world, or artificial reality, "...permit(s) the limitless availability of experience" (Higgs 1991:100) without the need for experience to occur within real spaces or contexts. The worry is that "as the interface between artificiality and reality becomes infinitely thin, the artificial becomes a dominant centre for moral valuation" (Higgs 1991:100) replacing existing methods of moral judgment which rely on reality as their central focus.

If the ability to make moral judgments with reference to reality wanes in favour of the artificial, or if we simply are no longer able to distinguish or care about differences between the real and the artificial will we become ensnared by Borgmann's claim that the moral inertness of things disallows any moral valuation at all? If themed experience is, as I have suggested, a device, it is a part of a technological paradigm which privileges means over ends. When themed experience encompasses nature in such an immediate way as it does at Disney's Wilderness Lodge, nature, too, becomes part of an artificial reality and a device paradigm. "The conversion of things that matter to us...into machinery...reinforces the idea...that technology represents an end in itself" (Higgs 1991:99). The creation of nature

by technological means, then, can be undertaken without thought to ends, results or the meanings that are generated by such acts.

This argument assumes that nature and wilderness are real, tangible places that do matter to us, that we care about them in ways that are both concrete and abstract, and that we can and will continue to distinguish them from artificial nature. "There is nothing wrong with artificial realities, so long as they do not overpower reality, or force a profound confusion over the relation between the ends and means" (Higgs 1991:101). With the increase in the artificial, particularly artificial nature however, it becomes more difficult to distinguish between the real and the artificial; "(a)s the art of simulacrum becomes more convincing, its fallout enters our bodies and heads with unknown consequences" (Shepard 1995:24). One of these consequences may be an increasing difficulty to value things as authentic and therefore unique. "Who cares about authenticity with respect to an imaginary origin?" (Shepard 1995:22). Once authenticity is no longer needed to make a representation meaningful, simulacra are all that may be left, nature remains only "of interest as spectacle" (Shepard 1995:25). At a deeper level, artificial nature implies that the value of real nature is negligible. "Plastic trees? They are more than a practical simulation. They are the message that the trees which they represent are themselves but surfaces" (Shepard 1995:24). The depth and value of things and places loses meaning in a world of breadth and infinite artificial possibilities.

Disney may also be unwittingly striking at the heart of its own core values with the Wilderness Lodge, which at once strengthens and weakens the argument it tries to make about the importance of authentic, made-by-God nature to the formation of American identity. If authenticity is at the root of this identity, then Disney's re-invention of the story of the great American West and how it shaped a nation and its people by artificial means undoes this legend in its very representation. If this landscape and this feeling can be created by Disney, what does this say about its inherent, 'natural', value, and the impact of this value on the American spirit? If it turns out that the landscape is not as real as we thought it was, does the identity of America gained through this landscape also come into question? If this identity sprang from contact with Nature how authentic can it be when its place of origin can be recreated by technological means at Disney's Wilderness Lodge?

Disney's creation of artificial nature and hyperreal natural experiences has direct implications for the theory and practice of ecological restoration. I touched on ecological restoration in the introduction as one of the interests which brought me to Disney and the

Wilderness Lodge, and my affinity with ecological restorationists who want to re-build community and culture through the restoration of land. Is ecological restoration in the same line of work as Disney, the creation of simulacra through the manipulation of landscape? Both Disney and restorationists are interested in shaping land, but their intentions differ. These intentions are based on different perceptions of the role that nature and wilderness play in human lives; while Disney "seem(s) to be engaged in demonstrating the inaccessibility of reality" (Shepard 1995:21) by encouraging experiences which rely on the creation of nature as a technological spectacle, restoration is interested in fostering "full, participatory involvement...with the created system" (Higgs 1991:103) in a long-term relationship between individuals and land. Higgs' continuum of restoration does not include the Wilderness Lodge, it is neither a "highly-regulated, policy-bound, scientifically precise effort...to replicate an ecosystem", or a "wildly creative project...the primary objective being aesthetic expression" (Higgs 1991:103). The Wilderness Lodge is a hyperreal landscape in which artificial experience *of* nature, not meaningful engagement *with* nature, is what is for sale.

While restoration projects are attempts to create actual, living, healthy ecosystems which may or may not incorporate cultural elements, the Wilderness Lodge is only a representation of an ecosystem and its cultural elements, with the cultural elements being the largest component of the construction. Disney does not claim that the Wilderness Lodge is a restoration of a national park, merely a tribute to the spirit of national parks. This tribute uses representation as a lens; "this simulacrum figures representation itself as an inert mirroring of a timeless, objective reality....the most pernicious aspect of th(is) objectivist view is the implicit denial of itself as representation" (Hayles 1995:51). All of the work that Disney does to highlight the fantasy of the Wilderness Lodge is overshadowed by the work they do to convince you of its realness; this bid for realism camouflages the fact that the Lodge is a representation.

Ecological restoration, the 'real' work of repairing ecosystems, is caught up in the confusion which is created between the real and the fake by the Wilderness Lodge and places like it. As hyperreal representations of nature become more acceptable as substitutes for the 'real thing', and as we are able to 'improve' nature by technological means, the value of real nature is threatened, "the artificial becomes preferable to the real" (Higgs 1991:100). The glamour of the artificial has the potential to erode the work and the meaning of ecological restoration. "The problem of forging nature becomes critical not in a milieu where a faked ecosystem can be distinguished and evaluated, but in an advanced

technological setting where the artificial and the real become unresolvable" (Higgs 1991:100).

In the case of Disney, who create their own referents, simulacra worlds for the simulacra forests, we learn to appreciate the authenticity of things which are human created, including a nature which we create at will. Further, we learn to appreciate and value those things which are authentically Disney, seeking out that Disney touch, searching for those mouse ears carved somewhere on the face of the Grand Canyon. It is the Disney version of nature which becomes the referent for experiences in 'real' nature, not the other way around. With the building of the Wilderness Lodge as another representation of the Disney version of nature, Disney's project of colonizing the imagination has come full circle as regards nature, wilderness and the frontier.

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